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.SPINOZA'S
POLITICAL AND ETHICAL
PHILOSOPHY.

BY

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
1903







prepared to prove in detail if necessary, that the exposition and criticism of Spinoza's philosophy which writers like Hegel and Erdmann have given, is, both in general and in its details, not tenable, and derives all its plausibility from an arbitrary selection of a few passages which had, for Spinoza, no such meaning as is extracted from them. I can say this without presumption, as my study of Spinoza was begun with an implicit belief that the 'lie of the country' had been for ever settled by these writers, and I was only slowly and most reluctantly driven to the conclusion that one must part company either with them or with Spinoza.

What this book attempts is, to furnish a connected and continuous exposition of Spinoza's system, and to discover how his ideas were related to one another. And perhaps I may plead the difficulty of the task in extenuation of some of the defects of this volume. The only part of Spinoza's philosophy which gets no separate treatment is his metaphysics. Want of space made this at present inevitable, and on other grounds I do not much regret it. For it can be shown that Spinoza had no interest in metaphysics for its own sake, while he was passionately interested in moral and political problems.  He was a Metaphysician at all only in the sense that he was resolute in thinking *out* the ideas, principles, and categories which are interwoven with all our practical endeavour, and the proper understanding of which is the condition of human welfare. A true Metaphysic meant to him true and adequate thinking of our own nature and our place in the universe.

This exposition of Spinoza may seem to borrow from later idealistic philosophy, and put to his credit principles which were developed only at a much later date. Of this I would only say that I have conscientiously tried to avoid

doing this, and have, as far as space permitted, furnished the reader with the passages on which my interpretation of his thought is based. If he, like Plato, saw far in advance of his time, and attained a view of truth which need not 'pale its uneffectual fire' before any later idealism, no *a priori* argument will prove that he could not in his day have done this. No law regulating the appearance of great thinkers has yet been discovered. An Aristotle may be greater than a Berkeley, or a Hume; a Shakespeare may outshine all who have come after him; and a Spinoza may be the worst of anachronisms. But these are phases of human progress which we cannot alter. The dates of a man's birth and death have little to do with his greatness as a thinker, or with his grasp of truth. The world has not produced a second Aristotle though time has not been wanting to it, nor has the march of civilisation made Plato's thought any the less vitalising and eternal in its significance.

I have, further, to express my obligations to those who have kindly helped me with this book. Professor Latta read a considerable part of it in MS. and made many useful suggestions. The Master of Balliol and Professor Jones have read the whole of the proofs and done much to improve the form of the argument; and I owe them not only this, but the unfailing intellectual stimulus and help apart from which this book might never have been written. I need not say that none of these gentlemen are to be taken as assenting to any of the views here expressed.

The references to Spinoza's writings are to the *Ethics* when not otherwise specified. The text I have used is the 2nd edition of Vloten and Land in three volumes. I have found this the most companionable and reliable text, in spite of the numerous misprints which disfigure it. The references to the *Short Treatise* are taken from Sigwart.

I hope that this book may be of some service in drawing to Spinoza's thought a greater measure of attention not only from students of philosophy, but also from those who care for those social, moral and religious interests to the study of which Spinoza gave his life with an entire consecration and a singleness of aim which have hardly had a parallel. I shall have but ill repaid the dues of my nurture, if I do not succeed in setting before the reader, in some measure, the ripe wisdom, the large calm outlook upon life, the resolute faith in goodness, the clear Jewish vision into the recesses of the human heart, and the all-pervasive religious passion, which have been to myself the constraining and the sustaining force in this long labour of love.

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW,
February, 1903.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE very greatness of Spinoza's chief work, the *Ethics*, is answerable for some injustice in the popular estimate of his philosophy. For when that book is taken as a self-complete whole, or as a full and adequate expression of his views on all problems of knowing and being, it is forced into a place which it was never meant to fill. To many difficulties it supplies only a partial answer, and regarding others it is entirely dumb. It takes for granted great principles which seem to stand in much need of proof, and it lingers over a multitude of details which are only of subsidiary interest. It constantly reiterates some ideas, while others of no less importance are touched upon only in an incidental way.

Again, while the thought of the *Ethics* is logical and closely-knit, the method of exposition is formal and repellent. Morality treated in geometrical fashion, principles of conduct proved by an array of definitions, axioms, postulates, propositions, corollaries, and scholia, do not now exercise the same fascination, even over the professed student, as they did in days when mathematics was the one type of exact or demonstrated knowledge. On the contrary, it begets in a modern reader the suspicion of a deductive or *a priori* manipulation of experience, and taints the whole atmosphere of the book.

Further, the *Ethics* presents itself, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter, without any indication of its origin or course of development. It affords few traces of any mental struggle on the part of its author, and it furnishes hardly

more information regarding the influences which were the historical condition of his thought. It is a deliberate attempt to have truths of science and of philosophy judged, as he recommends in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Ch. 7, apart from the life and studies of the exponent of them.

In each of these respects, the *Ethics* is a misleading, or at least an inadequate, expression of Spinoza's philosophical system. And to understand the significance of his thought it is essential to prosecute three lines of research which have as yet been only partially followed out. (1) To connect his various works together as parts of a systematic whole. (2) To trace out whatever lines of development, or stages of growth, are to be found in these works. (3) To discover the main sources from which his leading principles, his methods, his philosophical terms and the phrases he makes use of, are derived. If the effect of these enquiries should be to lessen the uniqueness and sphinx-like character of Spinoza's *magnum opus*, it will invest it with much more interest and meaning as the highest product of an eager mental life and of one of the great epochs of human thought. For while it may detract from the originality of the book, if it be shown—as can, I think, be shown—that much of it is derived directly from the current philosophy of the day, from Descartes, from Scholasticism modified by Cartesian teaching as in Heereboord and Clauberg, from Bacon and perhaps from Bruno; and that ideas of no less importance are drawn from the Bible, the Stoics, St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Philo Judaeus; yet this may be the means of bringing to light its real greatness and originality. For it will compel us to distinguish—and this seems to me the one really great service which an interpreter of Spinoza's philosophy can do—between the principles of his thought on the one hand, and on the other the method and philosophical language in and through which he gives expression to them. The latter are but the common coin of the realm. Spinoza makes use of them, but they do not bear his image. And while it is no doubt true that the ideas of an author are affected by the media of his thought, the ideas of a *great* writer affect the medium of his thought even more than they are affected by it.

In this way it might be shown that Spinoza did, and could, make no claim to terms such as substance, attribute, mode, idea, *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, will, *appetitus*, *conatus se conservandi*, etc., nor even to the definitions which he gives of them. Both the terms, and the meanings they bear in his system, are to be found in other writers antecedent to and contemporary with him. What is peculiar to him is the power and insight with which he fuses into a coherent whole elements drawn from many different and divergent schools of thought, and quickens old materials with new life by setting them in fresh relations. ✓

An adequate proof of these statements would involve a detailed analysis and criticism of Spinoza's whole system of thought. But this essay does not profess to do more than contribute to the understanding of a definitely limited part of this problem, viz. the connection between Spinoza's theory of morality and his theory of the State. To bring out the significance of his political treatises, and to show what light they derive from, and cast upon, his ethical teaching is its main end. So far as metaphysical questions are dealt with, they are incidental to the main argument.

It is a misfortune that Spinoza's *Ethics* and his political treatises have been so completely severed from one another, and that attention has been confined almost entirely to the former. Such a separation is to be deprecated quite as much in the interest of the *Ethics* as in that of the *Politics*. For to Spinoza these two sciences are almost as inter-dependent as they were to Aristotle. There is indeed this difference, that while Aristotle regards Ethics as part of Politics, Spinoza (see *Tract. Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 4) treats Politics as a part of Ethics. Yet, starting from opposite sides, they converge upon essentially the same result. For while Aristotle maintains that a true conception of the nature and end of the State will lead to right regulation and development of the individual's rational nature, Spinoza asserts that a true apprehension by the individual of his own real welfare will produce and maintain an organization of society designed to foster wisdom, justice, and charity in those who constitute it. The one shows that a true State will permit and enable each

man, or at least each freeman, to make the most and the best of himself, while the other works out the social and civil consequences that would follow if each man knew and sought his real good. Both, therefore, while they prove their thesis mainly from the one side, regard the moral life and the life of a political order as inseparable parts of the same whole. †It is important then for a balanced view of Spinoza's *Ethics* to take account of the political treatises which were to him its natural sequel or complement.‡ Many of the problems which force themselves upon a student of the former work find an answer only in the latter, such questions as, the relation of the individual to society, the nature of rights, the function of law, the end and the conditions of government, the connection between moral character and civic patriotism, the arguments for free thought, free speech, and religious toleration, and the relation of Church and State.

In other respects also the political treatises are of interest. In the first place their method of exposition presents no preliminary difficulty. Neither in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* nor in the *Tractatus Politicus* are we confronted by the rigid formality of geometric proof in which the *Ethics* is "cabined, cribbed, confined." Spinoza's thought was not wedded to this form of demonstration, since in only one of his works does he make any systematic use of it, and both his earlier and later works show only slight traces of it. Probably he did regard it as a more directly convincing mode of *statement*, rather than as a more cogent kind of *proof*. The results he reached in the *De Intellectus Emendatione*, the *Short Treatise*, the *Cogitata Metaphysica*, the *Letters*, and the two political treatises were in his judgment no less certain and valid than those attained in the *Ethics*; and they are in many respects even more suggestive as to the process through which his ideas developed and defined themselves.

In the second place, these Treatises on Politics indicate that Spinoza's speculation upon man and the world was not so abstract and *a priori*, so detached from ordinary human life and experience as it is commonly represented to be, but was on the contrary based upon the real world of motive and action. Dr. Martineau speaks disparagingly of Spinoza's

indifference to the stirring political events of his day, and refers for proof to his letters. But even these, few and fragmentary as they are, confute the assertion. The events of his life also, his friendship with the de Witts, his warm tribute to the free and tolerant life of the city of Amsterdam (*Tract. Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 20), his repeated references to the merits of the Dutch government, his acute remark that the English, after having removed their king, found themselves compelled to set up another with a different name, and ultimately to bring about a Restoration (*ibid.*, Ch. 18); and his allusion to the marriage of Louis XIV. of France with a foreign Princess, the daughter of Philip IV., as the cause of a recent war (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 7, § 24), all show that he was far from being an indifferent spectator of the drama of his time. But a much more important consideration is the fact that his theory of Society is based upon very considerable historical knowledge. The political history of the Hebrews becomes in his hands a fascinating text from which principles of wide application are derived, and his treatment of it is unsurpassed for insight and lucidity. Roman history, the constitution and government of Turkey, of Arragon, of Venice and Genoa, of Spain and Holland, of Portugal and China, are all pressed into service to give point to some general truth. Tacitus is a kind of Bible to him; while Curtius is scarcely less in evidence, and he refers to both Sallust and Cicero.

Some critics have hailed this as a proof that Spinoza, in his later years, turned from the formal and deductive method with which he started, to an empirical and historical one, and that for this reason his *Political Treatise* is of much higher value than his *Ethics*. In support of this there might be cited his constant depreciation of the attempts made by philosophers to construct ideal Republics, as contrasted with the work of the practical statesmen who know how men are really influenced; as well as his conviction that "experience has already revealed not only every kind of State in which we can conceive it possible for men to live together in harmony, but also the means whereby the multitude are to be guided or restrained within fixed bounds." "So strongly,"

he adds, "am I persuaded of this, that I do not believe it possible for us to attain anything by thinking on this question—anything at least which is not at variance with experience and incapable of practical realisation—which has not already been matter of experience" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 1, § 3). From this point of view he is as empirical as Bacon, and is in some measure under his influence.

But the contrast thus drawn between the method of proof in the *Ethics* and that in the *Politics* will not bear a close examination. It implies, on the one hand, that the *Ethics* does not rest upon a basis of history and experience, but is a purely ideal construction; and on the other, that in the *Politics* we leave all speculation, deduction, and metaphysics behind us. Both of these assumptions are erroneous. Unfortunately for the first, the composition of the *Ethics*, though slightly anterior to that of the *Tractatus Politicus*, is of later date than that of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. Thus the same mind which had already followed a historical method and was meditating a further application of it would be unlikely to treat human actions and passions from a point of view at variance therewith. The *Ethics* is, in Spinoza's judgment, a scientific or positive analysis of human passions, emotions, desires, and virtues based upon experience, not of what we would like them to be, but of what they actually are; and if such a study involves a metaphysics of reality and of knowledge, it is not thereby rendered less but more true to experience and life. If, to understand man and his powers we must connect him with God and the world to which he belongs and must prove this connection necessary, it is the problem itself which compels a metaphysical discussion. For the real question is, what is *involved* in moral experience?¹

On the other hand, the political treatises, despite their constant references to historical conditions and events, seek and profess to be deductive or speculative in the treatment of their own problems. "I did not," Spinoza says (*Tract.*

¹ It is to be noted, also, that Spinoza takes for granted in the *Political Treatise* results which have been attained in the *Ethics* by a method which (if we are to trust such critics) is the opposite of the inductive and historical.

Pol., Ch. 1, § 4 ; and cf. Ch. 7, § 25), "flatter myself that I would discover anything new or unheard of, my sole endeavour being to prove by certain and incontrovertible reasoning those things which are most in accord with practice, or to deduce them from the very constitution of human nature." And the point to which he is ever returning is, how do the principles which are essential for the unity and strength of society spring out of the universal nature of man ? Historical instances appeal to him only as they are *suggestive* of permanent relations or principles which are always existent and operative. To correlate these principles with one another is the task to which he sets himself, and such correlation alone constitutes for him a 'true' or 'adequate' proof. To 'deduce' a principle from human nature is to show its interdependence upon others. This does not mean either indifference to ordinary experience or the simple acceptance of its judgments, but a critical sifting of what experience presents, with a view to the discovery of essential or permanent relations which hold good universally. The *right reading*, or the understanding, of experience and history is the problem. Thus the *deduction* of a principle has for Spinoza its complement in induction and observation ; and one of the merits of his method is that it takes us, in one sphere of enquiry at least, beyond that venerable but most misleading opposition of terms. His objection to ideal constructions of Society, or to Utopias like Sir Thomas More's—whose work was in his library—was not that they were deductive, but that they were not real deductions. Their professed basis was a human nature which is nowhere to be found, and so the ideal society they portrayed was not an ideal community of men, but of angels or of nonentities. Let us, he says in so many words, take men as we find them, not as they should be or as we would like them to be. Let us recognise the motives that actually sway them, be these low or high. Do not ascribe to each man virtues of Reason and Will which experience shows that only a few men really have. If you want to make men better, do not begin by setting up an abstract ideal of human nature to which each individual is to conform, but recognise the nature of the

material with which you have to work, and fashion your methods and tools to make the best of that. Deduce and prove your principles, but do so by reference to the common nature of man.

(3) After all, however, it is not the method of a book which justifies its results, but the results which justify the method. Judged by this standard, what is the value of Spinoza's treatment of political principles? This question will find a more adequate answer in the course of our discussion of his ideas; but I may be allowed to indicate here what I hope to prove in the sequel. In spite of the fact that the *Tract. Politicus* is an unfinished treatise, and the *Tract. Theol.-Pol.* deals only in part with problems of government, they constitute one of the most striking and original contributions to political theory which we have from any writer between Aristotle and Hegel. Though these books have little of the passion of the *Contrat Social*, they have all its suggestiveness; and they show a firm grasp of principles and a power of working them out which Rousseau never had. They are inspired also by a love of liberty no less intense and by a sanity and balance of judgment eminently greater.

Even assuming the statement to be true that Spinoza's political philosophy has no historical interest, in so far as it did not affect the thought of those who afterwards worked in the same field, it would still have great value as an independent and fruitful treatment of the nature and functions of the State. But the assumption is, I think, questionable. For some generations after his death, no writer cared to encounter the odium attached to Spinoza's name by acknowledging any indebtedness to him. But his thought diffused itself even when his name was banned. The resemblances, for example, between his views and those of Hume, and not less on Politics than on Ethics, seem to me too pronounced and specific to be explicable otherwise than by supposing Hume to have had a direct knowledge of his predecessor's work. The melodramatic references to the 'hideous hypothesis' and the 'atheistic philosophy' are in the fashion of the day, and rather confirm than refute this supposition.

The main interest of Spinoza's political treatises, however, is still confined to the ideas they expound, though recent writers (amongst whom we may mention T. H. Green and Sir Frederick Pollock) have sought to give these ideas an ampler recognition and a wider circle of influence. To understand how far they deserve this, it is necessary to glance first of all at those writers to whom Spinoza owes most in his study of the State. Here we shall only mention them, and shall reserve the detailed statement of his obligations for the present. The one name which has universally been brought forward in explanation is that of Hobbes. Many critics go so far as to treat Spinoza as simply a disciple of Hobbes. Spinoza himself never mentions his name, except in two passages, one a somewhat doubtful passage in a Note appended to the *Tract. Theol.-Pol.*, the other in a Letter (No. 50) in reply to a correspondent who wished to know the difference between Spinoza's doctrine of *Jus* and that of Hobbes. But he had Hobbes' *De Cive* in his library; and there is a passage in the Preface to the *Tract. Theol.-Pol.* in which we are told that the chief points of that work are already well known to philosophers. Obviously then it was not any wish to conceal his obligations which led to the omission of Hobbes' name, but mainly the fact that anyone who could profit by such discussions would at once recognise the 'atmosphere' of the thought. Unquestionably the influence of Hobbes' ideas is written large on Spinoza's two treatises, and it is impossible to appreciate his point of view save through these ideas. I hope to show, however, that the points of difference are no less striking than the points of agreement, and that even in cases where the principles are verbally the same they are understood and worked out in a way which leads to an opposite conclusion.

A deeper influence than that of Hobbes was exercised by Hobbes' master, Machiavelli. When precisely Spinoza fell under the spell of that magician it is difficult to pronounce. In the *Tract. Pol.* there are explicit references of an important nature both to *The Prince* and to *The Discourses*; and the Spinoza Library contains two editions of his works—in whole or in part. But this gives only a faint indication of

the fascination which these works had over him. Not only the tone and temper of the *Tract. Pol.*, but also many of its illustrations, arguments, and phrases can be traced directly to this source. I am inclined to think that the Machiavelli influence is antecedent even to the *Tract. Theol.-Pol.* Not a few passages in that book, especially in Chs. 17 and 18, are but the application to Hebrew history of principles and maxims which Machiavelli had already deduced from Roman history and the history of the Italian States. If there is any one writer whom we may name Spinoza's master, it is Machiavelli and not Hobbes; and yet the point of view and the guiding principles of his theory are derived from neither.

Another writer who certainly influenced his thought is Hugo Grotius. Two of Grotius' books, the one theological (the *De Satisfactione Christi*), the other partly so (the *De Imperio summarum potestatum circa sacra*), are in the catalogue of his possessions, but the *De Jure Belli et Pacis*, we are surprised to discover, is not there. Whatever explanation be given of this, it is hardly credible that Spinoza was not acquainted with the greatest and the best known work of a writer whose minor works he had in his possession. And there are many striking resemblances between the ideas of the *De Jure* and those which Spinoza makes use of in his *Tract. Pol.*

He refers with approval also to the Dutch Publicists Perezius and V. H. (De la Court); and is acquainted, perhaps both directly and through Perezius, with Justinian's *Institutes*. Josephus is the pioneer he follows in his attempt to create a philosophy of Hebrew history, while Tacitus is the 'guide, philosopher, and friend,' who makes Roman history fruitful and suggestive to him. Another writer, whom he does not mention at all, but who, I am confident, strongly impressed him, is St. Augustine. Many points, and even leading principles, are drawn from the Latin Father, if one may judge from common features. And we know that Spinoza had a book containing an epitome of St. Augustine's works. Of the influence of Thomas Aquinas I should speak with less assurance. It is real in the ethical and metaphysical parts of his work, but less discernible in the political.

These, so far as I can discover, are the main sources from which he drew inspiration in his study of social and political philosophy. It is natural to regret the absence from the list of the two great names of Plato and Aristotle. Of Aristotle he seems to have had no direct knowledge, and very little indirect. He even ascribes the phrase, 'Man is a political being,' to the Scholastics ; and bases his depreciatory remarks about Aristotle upon the trifling scholastic distinctions in which his mediaeval followers exercised their ingenuity. Of Plato he had formed a more favourable estimate (perhaps through the influence of St. Augustine), but his writings show hardly more knowledge of him than of Aristotle. These 'might have beens' we may lament, as in the parallel case of Kant, but after all they are not only unavailing, but tend to prove the vigour of the intelligence which, with defective resources, could accomplish so much.

For despite the number and the greatness of the writers to whom Spinoza is indebted, he has a gospel of his own, and can preach it. Neither Hobbes nor Machiavelli, neither Grotius nor St. Augustine account for his theory of Society, though they all contribute something to it. From the premises of *The Prince* he reaches a conclusion analogous to that of the *Civitas Dei* ; and on the basis of Hobbes' absolutism he builds a superstructure of popular liberties better secured than that of either Locke or Rousseau.

The proof of this involves, in the first place, a detailed study of Spinoza's ethical principles, for it is from these that he develops his political doctrine.

CHAPTER II.¹

GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

SPINOZA'S main impulse towards Philosophy was to find an answer to the question wherein does man's welfare or happiness consist, and how can he best attain it? Metaphysic, Logic, Physics, Psychology, Biblical Criticism, and Politics have all for him a high interest of their own, and are treated with greater or less fulness; but ultimately they are all subordinated to this supreme problem; and the consideration of human *Utilitas* is the dominating motive of all his speculation.

The value of such a conception depends entirely on the spirit in which it is interpreted. For the advantage or welfare of man will be a fruitful, or a barren, conception in a system of philosophy according to the greater or less comprehensiveness of the writer's thought. What it embraces for Spinoza we may indicate, at least in a bird's eye view, by quoting two representative passages. In the *De Intell. Emend.* he tells us that man's highest perfection or advantage consists in the knowledge of the union in which the mind stands with Nature as a whole.

"The end, therefore, for which I strive is to acquire such a nature, and to assist many others to acquire it along with me. That is to say, it is a condition of my own happiness that I take pains that many others may understand as I do, so that their intellect and their desires shall be in complete harmony with my intellect and desires. But if this is to take

¹ A reader unacquainted with Spinoza's philosophy may find it better to omit this chapter till he has perused the rest of the book, or to return to it after doing so. The principles here set forth are the operative ideas in Spinoza's thought; while the Definitions, Postulates, and Axioms set at the beginning of the *Ethics* are Definitions, Postulates, and Axioms, not Principles or constitutive notions.

place we must understand so much about Nature as will enable us to acquire such a nature ; and, besides, we must form such a Society as will enable men in general to attain it in the easiest way, and to maintain it. To this end we must study Moral Philosophy and the Theory of Education. And as health is no unimportant means for securing this we must cultivate Medicine as a whole. Further, as many things which are difficult are made easy by the arts, thereby enabling us to save much time, and to have at our disposal many conveniences in life, we should on no account neglect the Physical Sciences. But, above all, we must discover some way of improving and purifying the intelligence, that its understanding of things may be free from error, and as complete as possible. From these statements it will be clearly seen that I wish to direct all the sciences to this one end and aim, viz. to the attainment of that highest human perfection of which we have spoken."

And in another work (*Tract. Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 3) he gives a more precise analysis of the nature and conditions of this perfection :

"All the things which we can honourably desire may be reduced to three at the most, viz. (1) The understanding of things through their first causes ; (2) the government of our passions, or the attainment of a virtuous character ; (3) a life of security, and passed in the enjoyment of good health."

The first two of these, and also the third in great measure, are within our own power.

Of these three ends of human desire Spinoza gives the primacy to the first. All of them are indeed characteristically human desires, which cannot be found in any other object or being except man. But the first is the condition, and even the source, of the others. It is its own explanation, and theirs as well. For man is able to control his passions, to acquire virtuous habits, and to form settled communities, only because there is implanted in him still more deeply the power to apprehend things through their causes, and to refer them to one 'concatenated' order, or to God conceived as the unity and reality of all that is. This union of the mind with God, or with Nature as a whole, is the essential condition of all moral goodness and of all political unity. In the *Short Treatise*, for example (Part 2, Ch. 26, § 2), Spinoza says, "It is not the case, as is commonly represented, that we must first subdue our

passions before we can attain to the knowledge, and thereby to the love of God. This would be like saying that a man who is ignorant must first get rid of his ignorance before he can attain to knowledge. But just as knowledge alone is the cause of the destruction of ignorance, so too without *virtus*, or (to express it better) without the guidance of the intelligence, everything goes amiss." Similarly, the whole argument of the *Tract. Theol.-Pol.* is an attempt to prove that not only is freedom of thought and enquiry, liberty to search out the truth and to communicate it, not incompatible with a stable political order, but that the refusal to recognise and to foster such freedom inevitably brings about the dissolution of the State itself. For the free exercise of the intelligence is a supreme and absolute good to which even necessities of State (or what claim to be such) must bow. "Men's minds may indeed be so filled with prejudices that they will fight for slavery thinking it to be their welfare; but such prejudices, by obstructing the free judgment by which we distinguish between the true and the false, make men into irrational animals" (Preface to *Theol.-Pol.*). The same idea finds expression in the *Short Treatise* (Part 2, Ch. 24, §§ 7 and 8):

"It is to be noted that man is conscious of two sorts of laws—the man, that is to say, who makes a right use of his intelligence and comes to the knowledge of God. These two sets of laws spring, the one from that which man has in common with God, the other from that which he has in common with the modes of Nature. The first of these relations is necessary, but the other is not. For in the first case, as man is always without intermission necessarily united with God, he always has before his eyes the laws according to which he must live for God and with God, and he cannot help having them before his eyes. But as regards the law which arises from man's community with modes, that is, in so far as he cannot separate himself from men, the necessity is not so great."

In other words, while man "cannot be separated" from other men, this relation—necessary though it be—does not cut so deeply into human nature as that which at each moment links him to God.

Thus, to know God as the first cause of all things is, for Spinoza, the fundamental, and in a sense the only,

principle which explains any phase of human endeavour. It is the condition and the soul of social concord and security no less than of a virtuous character or a truth-seeking intellect. To him, God is the source and the spirit of all knowing and of all existence. Whatever is real is real only in and through God, for he is the immanent energy, the soul, life and power of all that is. This conception, that nothing comes into being, or continues in being, save in and through God, and that all that does exist—the cosmos with its varied energies and forms of being—is real, and instinct with divine power and perfection, is the dominating thought in all Spinoza's great works. Only in the *Treatise on Descartes* is it absent, or only tentatively held. But as early as the *Short Treatise* Spinoza has definitely and clearly grasped it; and all his other works not only embody it, but are simply the development of it, or the unfolding of what is involved in it.

To say that Spinoza has only the conception of Substance but not that of Subject, Spirit, or System seems to be beside the point. It is no more than an assertion that Substance is a better word than Subject, an assertion which cannot be proved. Substance, as Spinoza uses it, is not the opposite of Spirit, for it includes within it all the immanent energies and activities, the spiritual functions, the interrelation or 'concatenation' of facts and events, which are the essence of Spirit; and it is material only in the sense that even matter is spiritual. If then Spinoza calls the unity and inter-connectedness of all existence a "Substance consisting of infinite attributes," he has as much right to call it Substance as another has to call it Subject. 'A rose, by any other name, would smell as sweet.' All that really matters is, whether, having called this Immanent Causality Substance in a sense in which there can be no substance other than itself, he adheres to this conception of its nature, and works out his principle as fruitfully and suggestively as if he had used the other name. The proof of the cook's recipe is the eating of the pudding. The value of a philosopher's principle is just what he gets out of it, or what he thinks in and through it. What he *calls* it matters nothing if he makes it a key to our hearts

and to the meaning of existence. For it is the system itself in its working-out and the connection of its parts which makes the name by which it is known honourable or base. Pompey is as fine a name as Caesar if you take them apart from the actual lives which alone give them character.

What concerns us here then is to have Spinoza's system judged on its merits, or demerits, as a system, and not to have it prejudged by a gloss upon a phrase. For it is what he says, and not the words in which he says it, that are of interest in philosophy.

It should be noted then, that God, to Spinoza, is not a substance, or substance in our use of the term. He is "a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance *consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses an eternal and infinite essence*" (Def. 6). But if we are ready to give to substance the meaning, "that which exists in itself and is conceived through itself; that is to say, that the concept of which does not need the concept of another object from which it must be formed," as Spinoza gives it in Def. 3, then we may say that God is substance (not *a* substance), that is self-subsistence, or the whole which has nothing outside of itself, but within which all reality falls. *In this sense* nothing can be substantial except God, that is, God is the only self-contained, self-complete, and self-maintained being. Spinoza does not dream of denying that finite things and beings are substances or substantial in our common use of the terms. The reality of the outer world and of the events, causes, relations, persons, and things in it, he never, so far as I know, questions. But his point is, none of these are self-contained, independent, self-subsistent. You must think a cause through its effect, and *vice versa*. It is not in itself but in another, and to understand it you must think it through that other. A man is not a self-complete whole. You must think him through his relations to other men. His beginning to exist and his ceasing to exist are not in himself but in other things. The nature of any man, or his essence, does not involve necessary existence. He can cease to live without any contradiction. And the reality which he does have is entirely within a whole of which he is himself only a part.

But none of these statements can be made of that which is self-subsistent or "exists in itself and is conceived through itself." It can have no relation to anything else. It is real in a sense in which no finite object or being ever can be real. It is self-complete, self-caused (*causa sui*), for all causality is within it, and its essence does involve necessary and eternal existence, for all that exists can exist and maintain itself only within this whole.

It is for this reason that Spinoza speaks so strongly against anthropomorphic views of God. Why, he asks, will men identify God with a magnified man? Why can they not worship him without picturing him as a being with human qualities indefinitely enlarged? Why should he be like man at all? If he called man into being and sustains him in being, did he not also call the serpent, the mountain, the lightning into existence? He is their God, or the principle of their existence, as much as he is man's. Hence "if a circle could think, it would ascribe to God a circular nature." Each thing and being would image the ultimate principle of existence after its own likeness. And yet what actual resemblance can there be between the whole in which 'all things live and move and have their being,' and any particular finite existence? Is it not destructive of its very nature thus to picture it? The attempt to prove that God is a magnified man Spinoza resists in the interest of a truer view. God is all that man is. He has intellect and will, only they are so different from man's, that there is no more real resemblance between them than there is between "the dog-star and the dog which barks." The difference between God and a man is of such a nature that a man's qualities can no more furnish a definition of his essence than "an elephant's would." That is to say, the difference between one finite existence and another is negligible in comparison with the difference between the highest finite being and God.

Spinoza's point then is, that God is necessarily all that man is, for man, like everything else, has all his powers, spiritual as well as physical, from him. But he is so much more than any man is, or can be, that his essence is entirely different from man's. The laws according to which he acts

have in view not only man's good but the perfection of the universe as a whole. Within this universal whole man is a part, a part which can think it is true, but still only a part. God is man's good and highest welfare, but 'his tender mercies are over all his works' as well, and there is no special providence which preserves man's life and happiness inviolable under all conditions: it is often sacrificed to, and becomes the prey of, lower forms of existence. Man's highest power is just the power to think the universal order to which he belongs, of which he can never be more than a part, and within which he must exist if he exists at all,—to think it and know it and find his welfare in and through it. For this is God's law for him, the highest good which his nature is capable of attaining, the knowledge of God's infinite and eternal existence which constitutes reality in every form.

The main lines along which Spinoza works out this idea of God as the immanent principle of all existence, I shall simply indicate here. To follow them out in detail is the *raison d'être* of the rest of this book.

In the first place then, if God is the immanent cause of all that happens and exists, a true understanding of Nature and its laws will be one form in which the knowledge of God's nature will be attainable by us. This Spinoza repeatedly maintains in such passages as the following:

"It is certain that all things which exist in Nature involve and express the notion of God in proportion to their essence and their perfection; and thus the better we know natural things, the greater and the more perfect is the knowledge we gain of God" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 4). "We know God and God's will the better, the better we know natural things, and the more clearly we understand how they depend on their first cause, and how they operate according to the eternal laws of Nature" (*Ibid.* Ch. 6). "The better we understand particular things, the better do we understand God" (*Ethics*, v. 24). "We can understand nothing concerning Nature without at the same time rendering our knowledge of God or the first cause more ample" (*De Intell. Emend.*).

This does not mean that from the existence of natural objects we infer the existence of a cause which must have produced them. This professed inference Spinoza will not recognise. For the things from which we start express God

and are what they are only in and through him. You cannot therefore infer *from* them *to* him, but you can find him in them, and by understanding their powers and modes of existing and acting, and in the measure in which you do so, you understand God's will and intelligence. Thus the more clear and complete our knowledge of Nature and its laws, the better do we know God. "And since the laws of Nature extend *ad infinita*, and are conceived by us *sub quadam specie aeternitatis*, and Nature, in accordance therewith follows a fixed and unchanging order, these very laws do thus far show us in some manner the infinity, eternity, and unchangeableness of God." Those who refer to the will of God only those things which they do not understand (see *Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 6), speak in a very silly way. For (1) what they do understand reveals to them nothing but God's will and thought; and (2) not to understand things is to be in that respect ignorant of God and of his will.

It is a corollary from this that in so far as we know God or understand the unity and concatenation of Nature, we will look upon things and events not as the product of chance or accident, but as necessary.

In the second place, the knowledge of God as the immanent cause of all that exists and happens bestows upon man the highest excellence or *virtus*, because it gives him the greatest measure of power both over the world and over himself.

"The *summum bonum* of the Mind is the knowledge of God, and the Mind's highest excellence is to know God. Again, only in so far as the Mind understands is it active, and only in this respect can it be truly said that it acts from *virtus*. Therefore the absolute *virtus* of the Mind is to understand. But the highest thing which the Mind can understand is God; therefore the Mind's supreme *virtus* is to understand or to know God" (Part IV. 28).

This double fact, viz. that God is not outside of, but the soul, and the essence, of Nature, and (2) that the knowledge of God in this way confers upon man perfection of power or *virtus*, is the source of true human *felicitas* or *beatitudo*. "It is of the highest advantage in life to perfect the intellect or reason as far as possible. Yea, in this one thing man's

supreme felicity or blessedness consists ; for blessedness is nothing but that very peace of soul (*acquiescentia animi*) which springs from an intuitive knowledge of God. And to perfect the intellect is nothing else than to understand God and God's attributes, and the activities which follow from the necessity of his very nature " (Part 4, Append., § 4). And in a later passage we are told that "*Beatitudo* consists in love toward God, that love which springs from the third kind of knowledge ; and so such love must be referred to the Mind in so far as it is active ; and thus it is *virtus* itself. Again, the more the Mind finds its joy in this divine love or blessedness, the more does it understand, that is, the more power does it have over the emotions, and the less does it suffer from emotions which are bad ; and so from the fact that the Mind rejoices in this divine love or blessedness it has the power to restrain the passions. And because man's power for restraining his emotions consists in his intelligence alone, no one therefore finds joy in blessedness because he has restrained his emotions, but on the contrary the power of restraining the passions springs from blessedness itself" (Part 5, Prop. 42).

The line of argument in these and other passages involves that clear knowledge is at once the beginning and the end of human happiness. For it both enables us to grasp things in their real nature by referring them to the principle which constitutes them as parts of a whole, and it also produces in us the highest activity or exercise of faculty of which our nature is capable. From it the highest *virtus* attainable by us, that is, the highest human *potentia*, springs ; and the forth-putting of this *virtus* gives rise to that rest of spirit (*acquiescentia animi*) which is the supreme end of human endeavour.

These ideas raise many problems for discussion which we cannot here deal with. But one question lies in our path, viz. whether this does not involve the reduction of all virtue to intellectual virtue, the identification of the good will with clear intelligence, and the subordination of both moral and political obligation to the apprehension of truth. To this question there must, I think, be given both an affirmative

and a negative answer. An affirmative (1) because Spinoza recognises no other absolute good for man than the knowledge and the 'intellectual love' of God as the beginning and end, the life and energy of all that is. Every other so-called good may be good at one time and bad at another, good for one man but bad for others. This alone is self-complete, self-communicable, and undiminished by the participation of others in it. (2) Thus the *virtus* which enables man to know his place and relation to God, or to the Universe of which he is a part, is not only one, or even the highest, form of virtue, but the essence and the source of all virtue. (3) Neither moral duty nor political organisation have any validity or justification in the long run except as they serve to foster and develop the free intelligence of men.

But on the other hand, a negative answer to the question would be at least as true, for (1) Spinoza denies that division between the intellect and the will on the assumption of which the question proceeds. "Will and Intellect," he says (Part 2, Prop. 49, Coroll.), "are one and the same thing"; and while he uses Will, as Descartes does, to express the power of affirming or denying the truth of an idea which is presented to the mind, yet by disputing the reality of any separation between having an idea in the mind, and judging it to be true or false, he is preparing the way for the view that man necessarily desires what he really knows. If we *know* the Good, we cannot help loving and seeking it, for we must love and seek the best thing we know. Thus the assumed division between that which a man understands, and that in which he seeks to find his satisfaction, is changed into a division within knowledge itself. And instead of saying "I know the better and approve it, and yet I follow the worse," we must say, "I do not really *know* the better as my welfare, for all true knowledge involves a union of the mind with the object it knows." Whether this re-statement of the problem be a far-reaching or only a verbal change, we need not, for our present purpose, enquire. It is sufficient here to point out that Spinoza maintains that all genuine knowledge is practical as well as theoretical, and that it is as impossible to

know and not do, as to have a true idea without consciousness of its truth. Thus the view that all virtue is in essence intellectual does not mean that it is sufficient to know the good, but that, if we know it, we must do it, and that we cannot seek it save as we apprehend it as constituting our advantage.

(2) Another point has to be borne in mind, viz. that to Spinoza intellectual *virtus* does not mean simply knowledge in the sense in which the man of ordinary experience or the man of science would use the term. It is indeed the knowledge of the world, but it is also the knowledge of oneself, and, above all, it is the apprehension of these through their first cause as the principle of all reality. Thus it is an attitude of Spirit, or a religious temper, rather than intellectual acquirements. As such it is an implicit universal from which thought and action necessarily spring.

(3) The knowledge and "intellectual love" of God, in which man's *virtus* consists, involves all that is constitutive of human welfare. It is not an abstract principle of unity, but an immanent and concrete energy. To know God is to see in the laws and events of Nature the revelation of his will, or his eternal decrees. To 'love God' is to accept the order of the world, with all its necessity and invariable sequence, and even with its apparent indifference to moral character, as not only inevitable but perfect. Further, to know and love God is to know and love one's fellowmen, for they too are part of that real world which 'expresses' God; and hence all that makes for their welfare makes for one's own. Spinoza adopts, in the largest sense, the words of one of his favourite writers: "If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar."

(4) Man's *virtus* means his *potentia*, his power over Nature, over himself, over others. But man has no power save as he knows, or understands, the conditions upon which its existence and its exercise rest. The wise man is stronger than the ignorant, for the

"Ignorant man, to say nothing of the fact that he is vexed in many ways by causes external to him, and never attains to true peace of spirit (*acquiescentia animi*), passes his life in ignorance of himself, of God, and

of things ; and as soon as he ceases to suffer, he also ceases to exist. While the wise man, on the contrary, in so far as he is regarded as such, is scarcely moved in spirit, but understanding himself, and God, and things, by a certain eternal necessity, he never ceases to exist, but ever enjoys true rest of spirit" (Part 5, Prop. 42, Schol.).

If these considerations be taken into account, it will be clear that (1) the knowledge and intellectual love of God is not a substitute for the knowledge and love of oneself, the world, and other men, but the principle which justifies it and makes it real ; and (2) that if the knowledge of God be man's highest blessedness, it is not because it makes action unnecessary, but because it imparts to action its right direction and its highest efficiency. The explication of what this involves is to be found in the analysis of the moral and the social life of man. To this task we now address ourselves.

CHAPTER III.

MAN'S PLACE IN NATURE.

THE moral problem defines itself for Spinoza as "the government of the passions or the attainment of a virtuous character," that is to say, how far does a man's power over his passions extend, what resources are at his command, which of his desires are good and which bad, what is the place and function of Reason, and how may virtuous habits be attained? The discussion of these questions raises issues which will be considered in their proper places. We shall here point out only the main line of Spinoza's argument.

He maintains in the first place, as against the Stoics, that man has no absolute power of controlling, still less of extirpating, his passions. It does not depend upon his will whether they shall or shall not exist. "A man is necessarily always subject to passions" (Part 4, Prop. 4, Coroll.). These are, in fact, simply the result of that necessary relation by which he is bound to the rest of the world. The individual is not an imperium in imperio, a little self-complete world within the larger universe, but only a part of a whole. Thus he is subject as much as any other object to the laws of universal Nature. His fate is not absolutely in his own hands, for he must "follow the common order of Nature, and obey it and accommodate himself to it as far as the nature of things requires." His power is defined by this condition. Not only is it limited; it is infinitely exceeded by the power of things external to him. Thus, if his fate is in any sense under his own control, it must be through his recognition of these conditions. These relations are necessary and

essential, neither constituted by, nor terminable at the pleasure of, the individual's will.

Man's passions are thus a standing proof of his interdependence upon the rest of the system to which he belongs. These may indeed often indicate the weakness of the human nature which is overmastered by them, but they always express and reveal the power of Nature as a whole. Avarice, envy, cruelty, lust, while they are vices, or as Spinoza prefers to name them *impotences*, of human nature, are no less the outcome of Nature's power than generosity, kindness, and chastity.

"When I call these and similar emotions bad, I apply the term only from the point of view of human welfare. But the laws of Nature have regard to the common order of Nature, of which man is a part. . . . And indeed man's emotions express, if not the power of man, at least the power and skill of Nature, no less than do many other things which we admire, and in the contemplation of which we take pleasure" (*Ethics*, Part 4, Prop. 57, Schol.). And in the Preface to Part 3 of the *Ethics* Spinoza develops his argument on this point. "Most men," he says, "who have written about the Emotions and men's way of life, seem to be treating not of natural things which obey the common laws of Nature, but of things which are outside of Nature altogether. Yea, they seem to conceive of man in Nature as an *imperium in imperio*. For they believe that man rather disturbs than follows the order of Nature, and that he has absolute power over his actions, being undetermined save by himself. Again, they attribute the cause of man's impotence and inconstancy not to the common power of Nature, but to some vice or other in human nature. . . . Such men will no doubt be surprised that I should attempt to treat the vices and follies of men in geometrical fashion, and should wish to prove by sure reasoning those very things which they are constantly proclaiming to be repugnant to Reason, and to be foolish, absurd, and abhorrent. But my reason for doing so is as follows: Nothing happens in Nature which can be assigned to any vice in Nature; for Nature is everywhere the same, and its *virtus* and *potentia* of acting is everywhere one and the same; that is, the laws and rules of Nature, in accordance with which all things happen, and are changed from some forms into others, are everywhere and always the same, and thus the way of understanding the nature of such things must also be one and the same, viz. through the universal laws and rules of Nature. Therefore the emotions of hatred, anger, envy, etc., considered in themselves, follow from the same necessity and *virtus* of Nature as any other particular things; and thus they are traceable to definite causes through which they are understood, and they have definite properties no less deserving of

being known by us than the properties of any other object in the contemplation of which we find pleasure. I shall therefore treat of the nature and strength of the Emotions, and of the power of the Mind over them, on the same Method as I have dealt with God and the Mind, and shall consider human actions and *appetitus* precisely as if it were a question of lines, planes, or material objects."

It is for this reason that he joins issue with those "philosophers who regard the passions which trouble men as vices into which they fall by their own fault, and are wont therefore to laugh at men, to weep over them, to carp at them, and those who make greater pretensions to piety seek to hold them up to abhorrence" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. I, § 1).

- The recognition of these passions as effects of definite causes is the first condition of any real apprehension of their nature and qualities. And we can so regard them only by approaching them in the same spirit as that in which we approach any natural object.

"That I might bring the same freedom and detachment of mind to bear upon the investigation of the problems with which this Science is occupied, as we do in the study of mathematical problems, I have been most careful not to make sport of human actions, not to bewail them or hold them up to abhorrence, but to understand them. Thus I regard human emotions, such as love, hate, anger, envy, ambition, pity, and the other agitations of soul, not as vices of human nature, but as properties of it, pertaining to it in the same way as heat, cold, storm, thunder, and other such things do to the nature of the atmosphere. For these latter qualities, though they are troublesome, are yet necessary, and have definite causes through which we seek to understand their nature; and the mind derives as much satisfaction from a true apprehension of such things as it does from the knowledge of those which are agreeable to the senses" (*Ibid.*, § 4).

What Mr. Morley says of Machiavelli (p. 20) is no less true of his great disciple, "He uses few of our loud easy words of praise or blame, he is not often sorry or glad, he does not smile and he does not scold, he is seldom indignant and he is never surprised. He has not even the mastering human infirmity of trying to persuade. His business is that of the clinical lecturer, explaining the nature of the malady, the proper treatment, and the chances of recovery. He strips away the flowing garments of convention and

common-place ; closes his will against sympathy and feeling ; ignores pity as an irrelevance, just as the operating surgeon does." What Machiavelli does in an unsystematic way, and in the interest of practical state-craft, Spinoza does with the precision and thoroughness of a scientific student, and in the interest of that virtuous life to which the strength and security of the State is in his eyes only a means.

Thus we have to recognise that the passions, both good and bad, follow necessarily from definite causes. They arise from the connection between man as a sensitive being and the world of which he is a part, but only a part. This connection he cannot make or unmake, and it is not therefore open to him to be free from, or subject to, emotions at his pleasure.

"We suffer (or are vexed by passions) in so far as we are a part of Nature, which cannot be thought of *per se* apart from other parts." "It is impossible for a man not to be a part of Nature, and to be subject to no changes save those which can be understood through his own nature alone, and of which he is himself the adequate cause" (Part 4, Props. 2 and 4).

Hence the strength and the persistence of our passions depend not merely on the power by which we endeavour to persevere in our existence, but also on the power of the outward cause in relation to our own. There are cases in which "the strength of a passion or emotion may overcome a man's activities or power" (Prop. 6), and in which, therefore, he is not his own master, but an instrument upon which universal Nature plays.

It follows then, in the first place, that man, being necessarily a part of a whole, can never hope to be exempt from the passions, as these are but expressions of this dependence ; and, secondly, that the strength and continuance of the passions which vex his life, as they are not due to himself alone, are not entirely within his own control. These conclusions, drawn from the nature of things, are confirmed on all hands by experience. How otherwise shall we explain the weakness, inconstancy, and folly of men ? If it is equally within a man's power to follow his real advantage as

to yield to a passing impulse which works him harm, how shall we account for his yielding to the latter?

“How much more prosperously would human affairs go on if it *were* equally in a man’s power to hold his peace as to speak” (Part 3, Prop. 2, Schol.). “Experience abundantly proves that there is nothing which men have less in their own power than the control of their desires, and that often, vexed by contrary emotions, they see the better and follow the worse” (Epist. 58, formerly 62). “The human mind, it is often maintained, does not owe its existence to any natural causes, but is an immediate creation of God, and is thus so independent of all other things that it has an absolute power of self-determination, and of making a right use of Reason. But experience has amply proved that it is no more in our power to have a sound mind than to have a healthy body. And further, inasmuch as everything endeavours to the utmost of its power to maintain its existence, we cannot possibly doubt, that if it were equally open to us to live by the guidance of Reason as to follow desire blindly, then all *would* be guided by Reason, and would order their lives wisely. But the actual state of matters is very different, each man being drawn away by his own lust. . . . Hence we conclude that it is not in every man’s power always to make use of Reason and to be at the highest pitch of human freedom” (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 2, §§ 6 and 8).

Both logic and experience thus combine to prove that man is not equally free, that is equally *able*, to live wisely and secure his real welfare as he is to yield to the sway of his passions. Were it otherwise, why should there be so few who follow the dictates of Reason, and attain to true blessedness and peace of spirit? The rarity of such lives proves the task to be a high and difficult one. For no man surely would be so insane as to desire and strive for the things that will infallibly destroy him, in preference to those which will necessarily bestow upon him a deep and abiding happiness, if it were equally in his power to know and to seek the latter.

How then is this bias in favour of the indulgence of natural inclination to be explained? What is its cause? The true knowledge of its cause is the necessary condition of its cure. There are two possible explanations. We may ascribe it, on the one hand, to an innate perversity of human nature, or of the human will, which in face of equally enlightened intelligence, and of an equal power of choice, “knows the better and yet follows the worse.” Or, on

the other hand, we may explain it by the fact that man is necessarily a part of a system, not determining, but determined by it, subject to the influences which it brings to bear upon him, limited in his power, partial in his knowledge, exposed to the sway of forces of which he is often but the instrument. The latter is the view which Spinoza maintains. Before working out its consequences we may note the grounds on which he would take exception to the other view. (1) A perversity in human nature is not a *vera causa*. It is no *explanation* of the fact which we set out to account for, but at the best another way of *restating* it, and at the worst a *reductio ad ignorantiam*, or a boast that we cannot understand it. (2) It looks for a cause in the wrong quarter. By regarding man as the only source and origin of his volitions, and passions, and actions, it cuts him off from that universal Nature apart from which he can neither exist, nor think, nor will. For any causality which would involve, as this would, the abrogation of natural determination and necessity is suicidal. (3) It regards the passions as effects of human power, instead of treating them as the proof of human impotence, or the evidence of the power of Nature over man. Thus even emotions like envy, hatred, jealousy are held to be positive qualities or energies in man, when in reality they express no less the absence of qualities or powers.

Spinoza, on the other hand, explains the apparent perversity of human nature by the necessary relationship in which it stands to its environment, and by the fact that the power of any individual as part of the whole is 'infinitely exceeded' by the power of causes external to him. It is not the individual himself that ordains what grounds he shall have for anger, fear, jealousy, love, but the universal system to which he belongs; and it is no more open to him not to have these emotions than it is open to him to believe contrary to his knowledge. "In our *Ethics* we have proved that men are necessarily subject to emotions, and are so constituted that they pity those who are unfortunate, envy those who are fortunate, and are more prone to revenge than to compassion" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. I, § 5). These feelings are

necessarily excited under certain conditions, and man has no power to attain to such a state of impassivity or apathy as the Stoics conceived, for even the good man is part of Nature and subject to the operation of laws which have in view a much wider good than his.

From this two other deductions can be made. (1) Vice is not unnatural, or contrary to the order of things. (2) Human good and goodness exist only as they are determined through man and by man. These are really two sides of the same idea, but we may take them up separately in order to bring out their significance. Both are tacit criticisms of Stoic doctrine. No passions or desires are unnatural, or in contradiction with the universe as a whole. Virtue is not more accordant with the natural order than vice; the wise man does not follow Nature, nor the fool disturb its settled laws. For this there is a double reason. (a) In the first place, the world as a whole has no ethical character; moral predicates cannot be applied to it. (b) In the second place, all that happens, including all human actions and passions, not only must be in accordance with the system of reality in which it has a place, but must also express, and operate through, the very power inherent in this System.

(a) Nature as a whole, or the cosmos, is not a subject of praise or blame. To speak of it as the best of all possible worlds would, in Spinoza's judgment, be as impertinent as to call it the worst. We who are but part of the whole have no right to judge the whole, as the very standards by which we seek to do so are those which have in view only our own welfare, or even our comfort and convenience. It is for this reason that he so strongly objects to the use of Final Cause as a principle of explanation, viz. because it inevitably becomes in the hands of an investigator a mode of proving that the universe and all its parts exist with a view to one particular part of it, namely man. This is far from the truth. For each thing in Nature might be called its Final Cause with no less propriety than man is. The system of things finds its realisation in *each* object, or has infinite ends in view. Nature, to put it in a word, is its own end, and the concatenated or systematic character of all its parts forbids us

exalting any one of them into a place of independence. For

"Man, in so far as he is a particular being, has no larger aim than his limited wisdom can compass, yet in so far as he is also a part and instrument of Nature as a whole, his end cannot be the last end of Nature, because Nature is infinite and makes use of him along with everything else as its instrument" (*Short Treatise*, Part 2, Ch. 24). "Nature is not held together by laws enacted by human Reason, the only end of which is to secure the real welfare and preservation of man, but by infinite others, which have regard to the eternal order of Nature as a whole,—of which man is only a small part—and from whose necessity alone all particular things are determined to exist and act in a definite way. Whatever in Nature then may appear to us ridiculous, absurd or evil, does so appear merely because we know things only imperfectly, and are ignorant for the most part of the order and coherence of Nature as a whole; and also because we wish all things to be governed by the rule of our Reason. But that which our Reason pronounces evil may be so only relatively to the laws of our own nature alone, and not in relation to the order and laws of the Universe" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 2, § 8).

Thus man's life is surrounded by a necessity which is to be accepted, not because human reason has created it, but because it is the essential condition of that Reason itself. Man's thought and will and purpose are caught up into a larger life, much as the ordered ways and wise industry of the bee (see *Short Treatise*, Part 2, Ch. 24) may be made to subserve another's will, or as a little worm in the blood (see Letter 32, formerly 15) may be carried along in the sweeping currents of a life of which it can itself have only a very imperfect conception. The proper recognition of this fact will prevent our being surprised at the occurrence of events, such as tempests, earthquakes, disease, famine, etc., which are harmful to human life. These are no less *natural* than conditions and events which directly contribute to the preservation and happiness of mankind, since the universal laws by which the cosmos as a whole is controlled have a wider compass than the welfare or misery of man. It is in the same spirit that Spinoza, writing to Oldenburg in 1665, says (Letter 30) of the horrors and losses of the Anglo-Dutch War: "These tumults move me neither to mockery nor even to lamentation, but rather to reflection upon them, and a better observing of human nature. For I do not think that

I have any right to scoff at that nature, much less to lament over it, when I consider that man, like all other objects, is only a part of Nature, and that I am ignorant how each part of Nature agrees with the whole, and how it 'coheres' with the other parts."

The non-ethical character of Nature as a whole is further proved by the fact that it does not lean more to the virtuous man than to the vicious, but dispenses with equal, or at least with indifferent, hand weal and woe to both alike.

"Experience has shown by numberless instances that good and evil fortune are meted out without distinction to the moral and the immoral" (*Ethics*, Part I, Appendix). "In the State of Nature all things happen according to the laws of universal Nature, and the same chance (to use Solomon's words) befallerh the just and the unjust, the pure and the impure, and there is no place for Justice and Charity" (*Tract. Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 19). "Experience itself also proves this; for no traces of divine Justice are to be found except where just men rule; in all other cases (to repeat Solomon's words) we see the same event happen to the just man and the unjust, to the pure and the impure,—a fact which has made very many, who believed that God ruled over men immediately and directed all Nature for their advantage, doubt regarding a divine providence" (*Ibid.*).

Thus Spinoza would meet the old problem of the unequal fortune befalling the righteous and the wicked, by denying that moral categories have any validity or meaning in defining the relation between man and the universe as a whole. We cannot say that Nature, viewed as a connected order, acts justly or unjustly, rightly or wrongly. Still less can any part of this whole, such as man is, give it a certificate of merit, or take it to task for its defects. In St. Paul's words, of which Spinoza makes frequent use, "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour." Nothing has any title to greater reality or perfection than it has actually received, since it has no title to *anything* save as part of that very system of reality on which it would pass judgment. Thus however great and significant for human life may be the difference between good and evil, virtue and vice, justice and injustice—a difference of which we shall hear much hereafter—these are categories of thought

which apply *only* to men. The universe cannot be characterised in such terms. It does not act justly though it bring good fortune to the righteous and misery to the unrighteous, nor unjustly though it transpose their lots. All that happens, whether it contribute to human welfare or result in human wretchedness, takes place according to universal laws.

Thus (b) all that happens is necessary, and every event is what it is, not because it is good, but in virtue of the power which it enjoys as part of a connected whole. The universality of law, and the relation of each object to Nature as a whole, are to Spinoza the condition of all knowledge as well as of all existence. And the clearness and thoroughness with which in all his works, but especially in the *Tract. Theol.-Pol.*, he develops and defends this principle at a time when Natural Science herself was only groping after it as a working conception, is one of his highest claims to honour. Any infraction of this invariable order would, he maintains, prove not the presence of an immanent intelligence and will in the world but its absence therefrom. It is the interest of religion, no less than of science, to recognise the stable and changeless laws of existence. For these laws are the laws of God, and whatever is contrary to them is contrary to the principle of all existence, and therefore unreal and unthinkable. "The rules which God has established in Nature, according to which all things come into, and continue in being—if we will to call those laws which are of such a sort that they never can be transgressed, such as that the weaker must yield to the stronger, that no cause can produce more than it contains in itself, etc.—are of such a sort that they never change or begin, but everything is fixed and ordered in accordance with them" (*Short Treatise*, Part 2, Ch. 24, § 4).

Thus all parts of Nature are 'concatenated' with one another, inasmuch as they all express the immanent energy of the one principle of existence. How this 'coherence' and agreement of one part of Nature with the other parts, and with the whole, is to be explained in detail, Spinoza confesses himself to be ignorant (see Letter 32, formerly 15), but that there is, and must be, such coherence and agreement can, he holds,

be conclusively proved. 'Universal Nature,' that is to say Nature regarded as a concrete whole of cooperating parts, is to him an axiom of thought, which needs no demonstration, since it is the condition of all demonstration. To discover *how* part coheres with part is the task of experience and science. But the thought of such a unity is the condition of science itself, yea, even of the simplest experience.

This is the *ground* upon which Spinoza takes exception to the principle of Final Causality. From the negative point of view, he agrees with Bacon, that Final Causes are barren. But he pushes the principle further, and reaches a deeper positive than Bacon. For while he denies that things have been made for an end, the point of his argument is that all things have been made for one another, or that any particular object is relative to, and intelligible only through, the universal laws which make it, and keep it, part of a whole. In refusing to admit that God acts with a view to any end, he adds 'any end other than himself.' That is to say, it is an external final cause which he denies, and he does so in order to make more assured the *immanent* causality which gives reality to all things. For God has nothing beyond himself at the realisation of which he may aim, and by which he may be moved to action. All determination with him must be self-determination.

Thus even finite objects have a Final Cause or end ; but their final cause is not this or that particular purpose which they happen to serve, but their place in the universal system to which they belong. And this can be fully understood and expressed only by exhausting the relations of this part to every other part and to the whole. In Spinoza's language, the Final Cause of each thing is God, or the universal order of Nature. To Final Causality so understood, he not only has no objection, but regards it as the primary condition of being and of knowing. It was because no one in his time did so understand it, that he discards the phrase altogether, and chooses to express his own meaning by the phrase 'Immanent Causality.' He objects to the popular view mainly because it put man in place of God, and treated man's happiness, and even his comfort, as the last aim of all existence.

This meant an exaltation of a part into a whole, a Deification of human reason and even of human passions. And though Spinoza has often been criticised as holding this very position, there is no one who argues so frequently and strenuously against it. He finds such an arrogant anthropomorphism an insurmountable barrier to all rational enquiry, the source of all superstition, and the egoism which robs man of his true happiness and freedom. Indeed so strongly is he impressed by the dangers, intellectual, moral, and religious, of giving any part of Nature—even man himself—that place which God alone, or the All-real, should have, that he declares man to be, *as a substitute for God*, no better than anything else. The difference between the infinite and the finite, or between the whole and any part, is so great that, in comparison with this distinction, the difference between one finite thing and another, is of little or no account. The world and man do not stand to one another in the relation of means and end. We cannot say with any truth that Man was made for the service of God, and Nature for the use and enjoyment of Man. God would in such a case be merely an ornamental figure-head, and Nature subject to human caprice. The universe, on the contrary, is a systematic whole, or a unity of necessary relations; and therefore one object may with as much, or, to be more correct, as *little*, right be claimed as its end or principle of explanation as another. This by no means implies, as we shall see immediately, that every object has the same value or reality as another, or that a man does not differ in perfection from a stone. But it does imply, that where all things and beings are reciprocally dependent, we are not justified in taking one part of the system, even if it be the highest part, as the explanation of the rest. Existence is not an endless chain, but a closed circle, or a whole which lives in *all* its parts. To understand any part we must know its 'setting' in the whole.

CHAPTER IV.

NATURAL NECESSITY AND FREEDOM OF WILL.

THIS train of argument will scarcely be taken exception to in modern times. We have at least learned from Science that man is not the end of Nature, that the stars were not made to serve as a lamp for his feet, nor the darkness to lull him to slumber. The standard of truth or reality is not the comfort or convenience of human beings. If man be the lord of Nature, he has a very insubordinate servant. If he be the last end of creation, creation often has much cause to weep over the fruit of its travail. And we have learned also, that Nature is a uniform order, connected and 'coherent' in all its parts ; and that every object is necessitated to be what it is and to act as it does, not through its own self-determination, but through the determination of other things, in so far as they are parts of the same system. On these points no contention is likely to arise.

But a question of keen controversy at once emerges, namely whether this does not involve that man is *nothing but* a part of the universal order, subject to the same laws, determined in the same way, and as irresponsible, as any lifeless object. If such a conclusion is inevitable, do not the principles of universal law and necessary determination prove too much? Will not such a result cast doubt upon the premises from which it is derived? Can we maintain moral freedom if we make the reign of law universal ; and, if not, can we afford to do without such freedom ?

This problem did not present itself to Spinoza in the same explicit way in which it is conceived by Kant. In the

main this was due to the fact that Science had not in the 17th century won any such success within its own sphere as tempted it to apply its principles universally ; and thus the antinomy between natural necessity and spiritual self-determination had not fully emerged. Yet Spinoza had his own way of conceiving the elements from the opposition of which the controversy sprang ; and, inasmuch as he had taken a firmer grasp than any thinker of his time of the fundamental principle of natural science, his attitude toward the problem well repays examination. That attitude indeed is by no means easy to determine. It is perhaps the most difficult part of Spinoza's system to interpret fairly. And it can be done at all only by bringing together leading ideas which are not only developed in different connections, but are to all appearance inconsistent with one another.

The main principle to which Spinoza unswervingly holds is that Nature is a systematic whole, concatenated in all its parts. Nature, however, is not for him the physical world, but the whole of Reality. Being the whole of Reality, we cannot speak of it as the 'other' or the limit of God, but as the Nature of God, or what God is. Of Nature in this sense, *i.e.* as including all existence, the conscious and self-conscious, as well as the mechanical and the organic, man is and must be a part. His relation to this system is intrinsic, essential, permanent. Whatever qualities, endowments, attributes, he may have, cannot be in conflict with this necessary dependence. If he can exercise reason, will, moral choice, these must be consistent with the unity in which he stands with all the rest of Nature, and be subject to its universal laws.

This leads directly to the rejection, on the one hand, of the doctrine of faculties, and, on the other, of freedom of will as popularly understood. The first of these is assailed as exalting an abstract universal, or an *ens rationis*, into the position of a real existence, or a true universal. The reference of a particular idea to a general power of understanding, or of a particular volition to the Will, furnishes no better explanation than the reference of a stone to a general quality of stone-iness. In neither case are we enabled to

understand the particular any better. While, therefore, we may use the terms will and understanding as general *names* for many particular volitions and ideas, we must remember that they are not *causes* of these particulars, and have no meaning apart from them. The *causes* are to be found in the relation of man to the objects which surround him.¹

On the other hand, freedom of will as commonly conceived is no less inconsistent with a necessary order governed by universal laws. } For such freedom is supposed to mean the power of acting without motive, or contrary to the strongest motive, the power of obeying or of disobeying Reason. It is, in short, the liberty of indifference, or of complete contingency. Against this, Spinoza argues repeatedly. In the first place, he holds it to be an impossible conception. It seems possible, only because we imagine man as a thing apart. If we *understood* man, we could not have such a conception. For, to understand him, we need to correlate his actions and volitions with the other parts of the whole system to which he belongs. } "In no Mind is there absolute or free will; but the Mind is determined to this or that volition by a cause, which has also been determined by another, and this again by another, and so on *in infinitum*" (Part 2, Prop. 48). "Men think themselves free because they are conscious of their actions, but ignorant of the causes of these actions." Thus, while men always do what they will, what they will does not depend simply upon themselves, but on the relation between their own power and the power of external causes. } They always act in accordance with the laws of their nature, and for that reason think themselves free, just as a falling stone would if it could think, but they do not recognise that what determines their volition is beyond themselves. In the second place, such

¹ Spinoza often speaks of a '*facultas*' of judging, a '*facultas*' of thinking, etc., and also of the 'Will,' the 'understanding,' etc.; but what he is concerned about is to see that these terms are used simply as *general names* by which we may conveniently remember, imagine, or describe to ourselves or others a multitude of particular activities in man. To take them as '*verae causae*' of these particular activities is to make the imagination do the work of Reason, or to save ourselves the trouble of acquiring knowledge of relations in their *detail*, by keeping a set of intellectual pigeon-holes where we may stow away facts under more or less appropriate titles.

liberty of indifference would be of no value, even if it were possible. If we could not count upon motives having a certain effect upon men, if actions were wholly contingent, if the will were independent of all content, then human existence would be the sport of chance and accident, and this would be the most wretched of all conditions. It would not be possible to train men to a *habit* of virtue, and government would, upon such conditions, be an impossibility.

Spinoza's contention then, is, that whatever freedom man enjoys, it cannot be a freedom of this kind. For such a freedom, being self-contradictory, cannot be ascribed either to God or to man. Any real freedom must find in Necessity, or necessary connection, not its enemy but its friend. There is no opposition between freedom and necessity; but the opposite of freedom is compulsion and the opposite of necessity is contingency or chance.

"I fail to see," says Spinoza in Letter 56 (formerly 60), in answer to a correspondent, "the grounds upon which you endeavour to convince me that the *Accidental* and the *Necessary* are not contrary to one another. As soon as I observe that the three angles of a triangle are necessarily equal to two right angles, I likewise deny that that happens by chance. Similarly, as soon as I perceive that heat is a necessary effect of fire, I at the same time deny that it takes place by chance. The opposition of Necessity and Freedom seems no less absurd and contrary to Reason. For no one can deny that God knows himself and all other things freely, and yet all by common consent admit that God knows himself necessarily. Thus you seem to me to make no distinction between Compulsion or force, and Necessity. A man's will to live, to love, etc., is not the result of compulsion, yet it is necessary; and this is much more the case with God's will to be, to know, and to work. If you bear in mind, moreover, that indifference is simply ignorance or doubt, and that Will is an ever-constant and in all respects determinate virtue, and that it is a necessary property of the intellect, you will see that my words are in complete accord with truth." This distinction is carried a step further in Letter 58, formerly 62, where we are told, "I call that thing *free* which exists and acts from the necessity of its own nature alone, and that *compelled* which is determined by something else to exist and act in a fixed and definite way. For example, God, although he necessarily exists, yet exists freely, because he exists from the necessity of his own nature alone. So also God understands himself, and indeed all things freely, because it follows from the necessity of his nature alone that he understands all things. You see therefore that I place freedom not in a

free resolution, but in a free necessity. . . . By these remarks I have sufficiently explained, unless I am mistaken, what my view is regarding free and compelled necessity, and regarding the fictitious human freedom. . . . As for Descartes' assertion, that he is free who is forced or compelled by no external cause; if he understands by a man compelled, one who acts against his will (*invitus*), I admit that we are in certain things in no wise compelled, and in this respect have free choice (*liberum arbitrium*). But if he understands by a man compelled, one who although he does not act against his will, yet acts necessarily (as we have explained above), I deny that we are free in anything." The definition of Freedom in Def. 7 of Part I. of the *Ethics* follows the same line, though in a somewhat less decided way,—“We shall call that free,” he says, “which exists from the necessity of its own nature alone, and is determined to action by itself alone; and we shall call that necessary, or rather *coacta*, which is determined by something else to exist and operate in a definite and determinate way.”

To trace the process by which Spinoza gradually emancipated himself from the current conception of human freedom as consisting in mere contingency of will, and rose to one which recognises necessary relation as its essential condition, would furnish one of the most interesting chapters in the story of the development of his thought. But we cannot attempt that task here.

What has been shown is that the concatenation and the necessary connection of all parts of “universal Nature” with one another are not violated or interrupted by an unrelated and uncaused faculty of volition in man, which makes him independent of, or superior to, the system of which all other things are but parts. What man thinks, feels, and desires, he thinks, feels, and desires, not in virtue of his independence of the world, but solely through his place and function in it, and as part of it. To exalt him into a *Causa sui* is really to render him impotent, and even to destroy him. God indeed is a *Causa sui*, and is on that account all-real and all-powerful. But he is the only ‘free cause’ (see *Ethics*, Part I, Prop. 17, Coroll. 2), because, being all reality, or Nature in the sense of all that exists, he cannot be moved to action by anything outside of himself. The only ‘free cause’ is the whole system of reality. To be this, man can make no claim. He is not only not the whole, but “the force by which he perseveres in his existence is limited, and

- is infinitely exceeded by the power of outward causes” (Part 4, Prop. 3). Thus whatever power he has will not be that of a self-determining and self-complete unity, but that of a part within a system.

This principle appeals to Spinoza with all the freshness of a new discovery. Indeed it is in his mind subordinate only to the wider principle of God conceived as the immanent cause of Nature, and it forms the most important corollary that can be drawn from that Divine Immanence. The conception of Man as an integral and essential part of the universal order of reality seemed to promise the solution of all the difficulties in which the popular dualisms between God and Nature, and between Nature and Man, had been so fruitlessly fertile. In two passages, one at the end of Part 2 of the *Ethics*, the other in Ch. 18 of the *Short Treatise*, he sets forth in a striking way the high anticipations he had formed of the value of this new principle. The latter of these passages, reflecting as it does more of the exultant hopefulness of a new discovery, deserves to be quoted *in extenso*.

“Having seen that man as a part of Universal Nature, on which he depends and by which also he is ruled, can of himself do nothing for his salvation and happiness, let us see the bearing of this upon our good, especially as these statements will no doubt give offence to many. (1) It follows from this view that we are really the servants, yea the slaves of God, and that it is our greatest perfection to be so *necessarily*. For were we dependent on ourselves, and not on God, we could accomplish little or nothing. We should in such a case have good reason to pity ourselves, especially in comparison with what we see to be our present case, namely that we are so dependent on him who is the most perfect being that we form part of the whole, that is, we are of him, and, so to speak, contribute our share to the accomplishment of the manifold and skilfully ordered and perfect works which are dependent upon him. (2) This knowledge also prevents us being puffed up when we accomplish anything noteworthy. For conceit produces in us the opinion that we are great, and in need of nothing, and such an opinion runs directly counter to our perfection, as this perfection consists in the constant endeavour to reach an ever higher attainment. But the knowledge of which we have spoken makes us, on the contrary, ascribe all that we accomplish to God, who is the first and only cause of all that we perform and execute. (3) This knowledge, to say nothing of the true love of our neighbour which it produces in us, so

disposes us that we never hate him, nor are angry with him, but on the contrary are inclined to help him, and to bring him to a better state. . . .

(4) This knowledge contributes also to the furtherance of the common weal; for the judge who possesses it will be saved from all partiality, and when forced to punish one man and reward another, he will do so with a view to the help and improvement of the one as much as of the other. (5) This knowledge frees us from sadness, despair, envy, terror, and other bad passions, which are in themselves the real hell. (6) This knowledge casts out all fear of God. For how could we fear God who is himself the supreme good, and through whom all things which have any reality are what they are, and seeing that we also live in him? (7) This knowledge leads us to ascribe everything to God, to love him alone as being the most glorious and most perfect being, and to sacrifice ourselves wholly to him, since this constitutes at once the true service of God, and our eternal welfare and happiness. For the sole perfection and ultimate end of a slave and an instrument is that they execute properly the work appointed for them. Should a carpenter, for example, in doing any piece of work find himself best served by his hatchet, the hatchet thereby attains its end and its perfection. Should he, however, say to himself, this hatchet has now served me so well that I will give it a rest, and will make no further use of it, then the hatchet would be cut off from its end, indeed it would no longer be a hatchet at all. In the same way man, in so far as he is a part of Nature, must follow the laws of Nature, this being the service of God, and so long as he does this, he is in the enjoyment of his happiness. But if God—if we may make such a supposition—willed that men should no more serve him, this would be to deprive them of, and destroy, their happiness, since all that they are consists in this, that they serve God."

Thus the dependence of man upon God, a dependence so absolute and complete as to be comparable to that of a tool or a slave, is an essential condition of his welfare and happiness. Whatever power a man has comes from his union with God, and the more unity there is the more power he enjoys. To weaken this bond in any way is to render the individual helpless, nay to destroy his very existence. If man has distinctive qualities and functions, these cannot be of such a nature as to lift him out of that world of necessary determination to which all other things belong. If freedom is one of his virtues, it cannot be "the freedom not to exist, or not to make use of Reason" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 2, § 7). If thought is free, this cannot mean that we are free to think as we please, because properly speaking "we ourselves never affirm

deny anything of a thing; it is the thing itself which affirms or denies something of itself in us" (*Short Treatise*, Part 2, Ch. 16, § 5); or as it is put in the *Ethics* (Part 2, Prop. 49): "In the Mind there is no volition, or affirmation and negation, save that which an idea, in so far as it is an idea, involves."

This line of thought, however, brings us face to face with difficulties which cannot be passed by. Admitting that Spinoza's criticism of the freedom of indifference and of the conception of man as an independent and self-determined whole is conclusive, does he not 'empty out the child along with the bath'? Is his own principle not, at the least, equally open to criticism? For does his argument not lead directly to the conclusion that man is determined in the same way as anything else, whether physical object or animal, that he is subject to the same laws as they are, and observes them as inevitably? And does this not involve that badness and goodness are intrinsically the same, or that morality itself disappears before cosmic force?

This interpretation seems to follow necessarily from the leading principles just stated. And it gets further support from explicit statements. For example, we are told that God gives no laws to men to reward them if they fulfil them; or to speak more accurately, God's laws are not of such a nature that they may be transgressed. . . . Indeed all laws which cannot be transgressed are divine laws, since all that happens is not contrary to, but in accordance with, God's decree" (*Short Treatise*, Part 2, Ch. 24, § 4). And it is but a Corollary from this, when Spinoza says (*Letter 19*, formerly 32): "For my part I cannot admit that sin and evil are anything positive, much less that anything exists or happens contrary to the will of God. I assert, on the contrary, that not only are sins not anything positive, but also affirm, that we cannot, save by a loose and anthropomorphic manner of speech, say that we sin against God, as we do when we assert that men offend against God." One of the propositions which is most strenuously maintained in the *Tract. Theol-Pol.*, the *Ethics*, and the *Letters* is that the conception of God as a king laying down laws for men, laws

which they are at liberty, or at least are able either to obey or to disobey, is a popular, and not an exact, mode of thought. "No one will be able to apprehend my view properly unless he takes great care not to confound God's power with the human power or *jus* of kings" (Part 2, Prop. 3, Schol.). For since God is the cause both of the essence and of the existence of all things, it would be a self-contradiction if anything were endowed with the power of acting contrary to his will. Nothing can act contrary to God's will save as it acts in contradiction with its own nature, and to do this is impossible. Nay, as God is the immanent and not merely the transitive cause of all activity, he would in such a case be willing something which he did not will. All natural laws are divine laws, and are therefore to be conceived as eternal truths, constant, invariable, and inviolable. The laws to which Man as a part of Nature is subject are the laws of God, being the expression of that universal providence which is but another name for God's continuous energy. Thus it is no more at the option of the individual whether he shall, or shall not, conform to these laws, than it is at the option of the stone whether it shall change its position or not. Moreover, such universal laws do not furnish any ground for distinguishing between the good man and the bad. From this point of view all that is possible is lawful, for only that is possible which is also necessary. Those to whom Nature has given natural inclination, but not the power

"of living according to sound reason, are no more bound to live after the laws of a sound mind, than the cat is to live after the laws of the lion's nature. Thus whatever anyone who is regarded as subject to the sway of Nature alone, judges to be for his advantage—whether such a judgment be prompted by Reason or by the Emotions—he has the highest Natural Right to desire, and every way of obtaining it, whether by force or by deceit or by prayers, is lawful for him. And consequently it is lawful for him to treat as an enemy any one who may be an obstacle to the attainment of his purpose. Thus it follows that the *Jus et Institutum Naturae* under which all are born and for the most part live, forbids nothing save that which no one desires, and which no one is able to accomplish. Neither strife nor hatred, neither anger nor deceit, nor, to speak generally, anything to which natural inclination prompts men, can be contrary to

Nature" (*Tract. Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). "From the point of view of the universal power or *Jus* of Nature, we cannot recognise any distinction between the desires which are begotten in us by Reason and those which are produced in us from other causes, since the latter as well as the former are effects of Nature, and express the natural force by which man endeavours to maintain his existence. For a man, whether he be wise or ignorant, is a part of Nature, and all that through which anyone is determined to action, must be referred to the power of Nature, in so far namely as this power can be defined through the nature of this or that man. For man, whether he be led by Reason, or by desire alone, does nothing save in accordance with the laws and rules of Nature" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 2, § v.).

These passages *seem*¹ to bear out that interpretation of Spinoza's teaching which most critics have deduced as the inevitable consequence of his leading principles. For what other meaning can they bear, except that, in a world where all that is actual is necessary, all things are equally real as expressions of God, and virtue and vice are alike natural? Does it not follow that man is determined as an animal or a stone is, and that the bad man 'expresses' God no less than the good?

This interpretation, however, is open to the serious difficulty that Spinoza himself does not admit it as the logical issue of his principles. On the contrary he develops from his leading ideas quite other, and opposite, consequences. "The inevitable necessity of things," he tells us in *Letter* 43, formerly 49, "destroys neither divine nor human laws. For the teachings of morality, whether or not they receive the form of a law from God himself, are yet divine and wholesome, and whether the good which necessarily follows from virtue and the love of God be received by us from God as a judge, or whether it issues from the necessity of the divine nature, it will not on that account be the more or the less desirable; as neither, on the other hand, are the evils which follow from bad actions the less to be feared because they follow from them necessarily." We have also to bear in mind that Spinoza not only works out a theory of ethics and of politics on the basis of

¹ I say *seem*, because, as I hope to show in the sequel, these passages unquestionably bear for Spinoza a very different meaning, and are the premises of far other conclusions.

these principles, but regards them as indispensable to any such theory. It may of course be contended that he does not develop his principles logically, but either accommodates them to the conditions of the moral life, or forces the facts of the moral life to conform to his first principles. Neither of these hypotheses can, however, be lightly accepted in the present case. The one would be too much at variance with the logical rigour and severity of his thought; the other would clash with that endeavour to understand the nature and conditions of human welfare or happiness, which was the origin and end of all his speculative analysis and criticism. The adoption of either alternative would raise more difficulties in the interpretation of Spinoza's thought than it would solve. Whether his principles admit of being so stated as to render both unnecessary, depends on the measure in which he recognises difference as well as unity, and to the consideration of this we shall devote the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

UNITY AND DIFFERENCE.

THE question whether Spinoza's leading principle explains and maintains the differences of things, or merely reduces them all to illusions of finite thought, is one which demands careful examination. In the one case we should get a concrete universal, in the other only an abstract unity. The one would give life and meaning to the world of knowledge and of existence, the other would be merely 'the lion's den' where all that enters is lost. It is this latter view which is generally accepted as true, and so far as our exposition has gone there would seem to be some reason for adopting it. For the burden of the argument thus far has been, that God has no 'other,' that nothing is independent of him, that all exists and acts only in and through him, that Man is not a *Causa sui*, that contingency of volition is an illusion, and that human thought and action are as much necessitated in accordance with universal laws as the ebb and flow of the tides. What other deduction can be drawn from this, than that all distinction and difference are but a mirage produced by human imagination; that from God's point of view a man is no higher than a stone, and the virtuous man is no more real than the vicious; that, *sub aeternitatis specie*, sense and time are no more than forms of finite thought, and thought itself but an epiphenomenon or accident of the universe?

Spinoza himself, however, gives no countenance to this deduction from his principles. He develops them in fact along the very opposite lines. So far from holding that God conceived as the principle of all knowing and being, or the

universality of law, reduces all things to a blank featureless identity, he maintains that in this way alone does each thing and being come to its rights, because only thus does it acquire the *power* to maintain itself and realise its distinctive qualities; and further that the difference and distinction in Nature is the *necessary* expression of the unity of Nature, and not in contradiction therewith.

To appreciate the process of thought by which Spinoza attains these results, we must return for a moment to that conception of *Deus sive Natura* from which he starts. This conception of God as the Immanent Cause of all reality is attained at an early period of his mental development, for we find in the *Short Treatise* two dialogues, which—whether the date of their composition is later or earlier than that of the rest of the book—show (1) that the question of the possibility and the real nature of such an Immanent Activity was occupying his mind long before the *Ethics* was written, and (2) that he had already attained that distinctive point of view which regards God, not as the transitive, but as the internal, cause of all things. "You maintain," Reason argues as against Desire, "that a cause, in so far as it produces its effects, must on that account be outside of them; but you make this assertion because you know only a transitive, and not an immanent cause. The latter in no way produces anything outside of itself. Take as an example the Understanding, which is the cause of its thoughts.¹ I call it a cause in so far as its thoughts depend on it, and a whole inasmuch as it consists of its thoughts. In the same way God is, in relation to his effects or creatures, simply an immanent Cause, while he is a whole from the second point of view" (Dialogue 1). This is Spinoza's reply to the difficulty how there can be a Cause which is one with its effects, and his answer amounts to this, that in the last resort there can be no *other* kind of causality. For in cases where cause and effect are apprehended by us as separate, and external to one

¹ At a later date Spinoza would at least have *hesitated* to speak of the Understanding as the *Cause* of its thoughts. In a sense it could have been maintained even by the author of the *Ethics*, but at this later period he had recognised the misleading associations of the phrase, and had definitely discarded it.

another, they present themselves as such, because we know only a few of their relations. Did we know them truly we should recognise that these relations are the expression of a deeper unity.

This idea of a Whole which is neither constituted by a simple compounding of parts, nor active save in and through them, is worked out in the *Ethics* under the forms of thought that were current at the period, Substance, Attribute, and Mode; and if *we* often feel these categories to be a cramping and distorting medium of expression, we need not tie down Spinoza's thought to our use of these terms. What he seeks to express is the notion of a *Causa sui*, free, not in the sense of having an undetermined will, but in the sense of having nothing external to it which might constrain its nature, the immanent cause therefore of all that is, and from which and through which all that is real comes into, and continues in being. This is the leading thought even in the first Book of the *Ethics*, and in the other Books of that work it simply becomes more explicit when the phrase *Deus sive Natura* takes, for the most part, the place of *Substantia*. It is a deduction from this, that "in the nature of things there is nothing contingent, but all things are determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and to operate in a definite way" (Part I, Prop. 29). The laws of Nature are therefore God's laws; and all that takes place in accordance with them is not only necessary, but is also in harmony with his will. It follows also that "all things and works which are in Nature are perfect" (*Short Treatise*, Part I, Ch. 6, § 9). For all "things have been produced by God with the highest perfection, seeing that they have followed necessarily from a given most perfect nature" (Part I, Prop. 33, Schol. 2).

These propositions seem to carry with them the conclusion (1) that all things and beings are not only determined, but determined in the same way; and (2) that all things and beings are not only perfect, but have the same or an equal perfection. Both these inferences, however, are at variance with Spinoza's own statements. To take the latter point first. While he asserts that each object is perfect when viewed in its place within the whole, he

does not hold that each is of the same value as an expression of that whole. To prove the first part of this statement he takes pains to distinguish between the ordinary use of the term perfection and what he regards as the proper use of it. As commonly employed, it means either the fitness of a thing for some particular end or purpose, or else it means the conformity of a particular thing with a general or universal notion which we have formed by noting the resemblances of many objects. In the former case the judgment upon the perfection or imperfection of any object or being depends on our point of view, and varies therewith. Its defect is that it leaves the matter at the mercy of each man, and presumes to find in human desire the end of the natural order. In the latter case it is we who first refer things to general classes or species, and then affect to declare that the objects which have all the qualities or characteristics of this genus or species are perfect, while those that have only some of these features are more or less imperfect. Against this labelling of things with class names, and calling it knowledge, Spinoza wages an incessant war on much the same lines as Berkeley afterwards followed in his polemic against 'abstract ideas.' It is a mere juggling with empty universals, the 'base money' of thought; and the charge of lending themselves to such intellectual obscurantism he brings against both the Platonists and the Aristotelians. To explain Peter they assign him to the class of 'rational animals.' But the real explanation of Peter is not to be found in 'Man' or in 'Rational Animal,' but in the essence of Peter himself, that is in his own relation to God. For the objects of God's knowledge are not universals, but particulars. So early as the *Cogitata Metaphysica*, Spinoza has clearly grasped this point.

"I cannot," he says in Part 2, Ch. 7, "pass over the view of those who hold that God knows nothing except eternal things, as, for example, the angels and the heavens which they have represented as unbegotten and incorruptible in their own nature, and that he knows nothing of this world except species, these being also represented as unbegotten and incorruptible. . . . But what can be more absurd than to deny that God's knowledge extends to particulars, seeing that, without the Concourse of God, these things cannot exist even for a moment. Further, their opinion comes to this, that God is ignorant of the things which really exist; and

what they attribute to God is the knowledge of universals, which have no existence nor any essence save that of particulars. We, on the contrary, ascribe to God the knowledge of particular things, and deny that his knowledge is of universals, save in so far as he understands human minds."

Thus abstract general notions cast no light upon the nature of the particulars which they are supposed to embrace. Nay, they not only give no real knowledge, they also produce erroneous judgments by setting up a false standard of reality, namely the conformity or disconformity of a thing with a general *type* of existence. Such a type is not in things, but in our minds only. And while it may be useful, in enabling us to remember or imagine a number of things at once (and may be known by God as thus serviceable for man's memory), it is not a *constitutive* idea, as it does not express the essence of any particular thing. If it were constitutive, then we would need to conclude, as popular thought does, that Nature often misses her mark, or turns out very imperfect work (see *Ethics*, Part 4, Preface), since the general notion we have formed of plant or animal or man is seldom or never to be found realised in any particular member of these species. Or, putting it otherwise, if we are to conceive of God as knowing and willing universal forms or genera of existence, we must conclude that something has come in to thwart his will, for these genera are nowhere to be found in Nature, and the particular objects that should have been their realisation are very imperfect embodiments of them.

Now what Spinoza seeks to do is to change this whole point of view. The change of meaning which he gives to the term *perfection* is but a sign of this more important change. "By perfection," he tells us, "I understand Reality" (*Ethics*, Part 4, Pref.). "Reality and perfection are the same thing" (*Ibid.*, Part 2, Def. 6). God is supremely perfect because he has all reality in himself. Thus the perfection of any created thing means its reality, and from this point of view, the imperfection of a thing would mean simply that it *does not have* certain qualities which other things have or which Nature as a whole has. But this

argues no imperfection in the particular thing itself. *It* has no right or claim to any more reality or perfection than it actually has, and it is not imperfect though there are many qualities which, *in comparison with other things, or with God*, are not inherent in it. It is what it is ; and what it *is not* or *has not* neither detracts from the reality or perfection which it does have, nor affords any basis for complaint that it has not more reality. Had it more qualities or reality, it would not then be what it now is, but something else. "A horse would be destroyed, or lose its perfection, as much if it were changed into a man, as if it were changed into an insect" (Part 4, Preface). Nay, if every horse were turned out of the same mould, or fashioned in complete accordance with some ideal equine nature, so that each member of what we call the same genus had precisely the same perfections, there would not be different horses at all ; a barren identity would take the place of the varied qualities and perfections which distinguish particular things from one another.

"Some say that God has no knowledge of particular and transitory things, but only of universals, which are, in their judgment, imperishable. But such a view arises only from ignorance, for particular things alone can have a cause ; universals can have none, because they have no existence. God therefore is the cause and guardian of particular things alone. But if particular things must agree with another nature [that is, with a general idea], they will not be able to agree with their own, nor to be what they actually are. For example, if God had created all men after the likeness of Adam before the fall, he would have created Adam only, and not Peter or Paul. But on the contrary, God's peculiar perfection is, that he imparts to all things, from the smallest to the greatest, their own essence ; or, to put it better, that he has all perfection in himself" (*Short Treatise*, Part I, Ch. 6).

That is to say, each thing has its own essential nature, whereby it is distinguished from everything else in Nature. It has its own perfection and reality ; and this is what constitutes its existence.

To this the objection may be made, after all these distinctions and differences are not *real*, but only *modal*, or a make-believe of human thought ; they do not exist for the divine intelligence, since for it there can be no

fixed limits. Man's mind may, like a prism, break up the pure unity into difference, but for God, both the variety and the mind which knows it, are equally evanescent and illusory.

My answer to this is that I can find little in Spinoza to support such a conclusion, and that it is contrary both to his leading principles and to his line of argument. He asserts indeed that 'finite existence is in part negation' (Part I, Prop. 8, Schol. 1), but it is so 'in part' only, namely in so far as no thing or being can claim to possess all the qualities of existence, or be anything save an element in a whole; in so far as it exists, that is to say, in virtue of the qualities and activities which it does have, it is not only real, but real for God, since it is what it is through him. Again, when Spinoza speaks of finite things, or of finite thought, as modes of the one Substance, or of its Attributes, he is not seeking to show that they are unreal or illusory, but on the contrary that this relation constitutes them real, or gives them a definite place and function in that universe of which God is the immanent principle. Modes are the different *ways* in which reality expresses itself. Thus while he might admit that all difference is *modal*, in so far as it is valid only for distinguishing parts of the universe, or of reality, from one another, and not for distinguishing between what God is, and what finite things are; he would not have admitted that difference is *merely* modal. This latter assertion would imply that difference *might be* something other, and better, than modal, and that if it is not, then it must be more or less illusory. But this would be to Spinoza an unmeaning statement. For while a mode, or a part of the whole, has not the same reality as the whole, in so far as it is not a self-complete, self-caused, and self-explained system, but exists only in and through such a system,—in Spinoza's language 'it exists not in itself but in another'; yet it has its own reality as a part, nay a *necessary* part of such a system. The differences between finite things, and even between the members of (what we call) the same class of things, follow from God's nature with the same necessity with which he exists and knows himself. "Par-

ticular things are nothing but affections of God's attributes, or modes in which God's attributes are expressed in a definite and determinate way" (Part I, Prop. 25, Coroll.). The necessity of things is itself sufficient proof that the finite, even as finite, is neither an unreality, nor an illusion of human imagination.

But, it will be said, surely finite or modal existence is for Spinoza transitory and changeable, while only Substance, or God, is eternal; and if so, how can the former be other than an illusion of human thought; how can it be real for God? The answer to this, from Spinoza's point of view, is, that as Eternity does not mean indefinite duration of existence, so neither does change or evanescence mean unreality. A thing is not more real because it has continued for a long time unaltered, nor less real because it undergoes change. The bubble on the stream is not any more of an illusion than the stream itself. Rightly viewed, it is the expression of the same reality. The oak tree whose existence is measured by centuries is not more real than the man who has to measure his by decades; and the momentary lightning-flash is no more an illusion of the senses than the fixed stars. Each has its own place and meaning in a self-complete whole; it exists and operates in virtue of universal forces, and through these alone can we understand it. This is Spinoza's meaning, when he says that 'time' is an '*ens rationis*,' and does not express the nature of things. Time or duration is the first, and least adequate, form under which the human mind conceives things. It presents them not as necessary but as contingent, and in a merely external relation to one another. But such knowledge is not really knowledge. What we want to know is why things are what they are, that is, the essential relations which constitute them. All things, even the most transitory, *may* thus be conceived; and so to conceive them is not to make them unreal, but to place them *sub quadam aeternitatis specie*. Such an eternity, however, does not mean indefinite duration of existence, but simply necessity of existence. Thus the modal existence of the 'snow fall in the river, a moment white then gone forever,' is an 'eternal truth' for him who

understands its nature and conditions, no less than the modal existence of the 'eternal hills.'¹

In respect of necessity then, there is no difference between the existence of one thing, or mode, and another. Even the modes of human imagination are necessary, and wholly real. They are erroneous, and fruitful in error, only when they are taken for something other than they are. The peasant and the astronomer both see the sun at an apparent distance of 200 feet (see Part 4, Prop. 1, Schol.), yet only the former is deceived. The astronomer is not led astray, not because he can explain away the *illusion*, but because by understanding the phenomenon it is no longer for him in any respect unreal or illusory.

Yet—to resume the thread of our argument—this universal necessity of all things and beings does not involve the reduction of all things to identity or sameness, either by treating them all as equally unreal in comparison with God, or by investing them all with equal reality because they all express his nature. The former alternative is ruled out by the fact, that things have no existence save in God, and, while they are real, they are so only in virtue of this relation. Thus, in so far as they exist they express God, or God necessarily expresses himself in them. To condemn a particular thing, because it is not the whole of Reality or God, is like condemning the hand because it is only a hand, and not the whole body. We gain nothing by seeking to

¹Cf. *Ethics*, Part 4, Pref. "By perfection in general I shall understand, as I have said, Reality; that is, the essence of each thing in so far as it exists and operates in a definite way, *no account being taken of its duration*. For no particular thing can be said to be on that account more perfect, because it has persisted in existence for a longer time; since the duration of things cannot be determined from their essence; inasmuch as the essence of things involves no definite and determinate time of existence; but every object, whether it be more or less perfect, will be able to persist always in existence with the same force with which it begins to exist. And so all things are in this respect equal." Spinoza's argument is, time is not in *things*; it has not *that* kind of reality. But it *is* a form of human thought. It *has* therefore *that* reality. Yet it is not the best or highest way in which man *can* think things. Therefore, as compared with what Spinoza regards as a *truer* way of grasping things, viz. through their own inner nature, it must be in great part unreal, seeing that the highest kind of knowledge does not express itself in this *mode* of thinking.

annul the part, if the life of the whole is in it ; we only impoverish the notion of the whole itself. And the latter alternative is excluded by the systematic character of Reality ; that is, by those differences which are the necessary expression of the unity of Nature. This is the point we have now to prove, namely that according to Spinoza reality *is* systematic, inasmuch as it is a whole not in spite of, but in virtue of, the different modes in which it is revealed.

It is not enough, I think, to admit that Spinoza *aims* at this result, though inconsistently with his own principles. On the contrary, the principles from which he starts, and with which, in the main, he works, rest upon a recognition of this idea. But, since this is a much-disputed point, it is necessary to bring forward the grounds for taking this view of his teaching. First of all, we have to note his supersession of the popular dualism, *Deus et Natura*, by the monistic principle, *Deus sive Natura*. This substitution, as we have already said, occurs very early in his philosophical development, and it definitely marks the advance of his thought from the conception of an abstract unity to that of a concrete whole. Both in the *Short Treatise* and in the *Ethics*, the prevailing conception is, that God is the all-real, apart from whom nothing can exist or operate ; and, on the other hand, that God necessarily expresses himself in Nature, and constitutes it a whole. He is the Immanent, not the transitive Cause, both of the Universe as a whole and of every object in it. The results of this, the greatest of all Spinoza's ideas, we cannot now develop. Some of them will appear when we come to deal with the meaning of the *conatus sese conservandi* and the *Jus Naturae*. It is at least indisputable that Spinoza uses the conception of God as the Immanent Cause of Nature to indicate that 'unity in difference' which makes reality a systematic whole.

Secondly, the categories of Substance, Attribute, and Mode are employed to express the self-contained, and self-dependent, nature of reality as a whole ; and not to express different *degrees* of reality or of unreality. Substance is not a reality, if conceived apart from the attributes which 'constitute its essence' ; and modes, or affections, are not

accidents of Substance, but the ways in which it, or its attributes, *of necessity* express themselves. Thus difference is of the essence of this ultimate unity. Nay, not only difference, but the differences which actually exist. "Things could have been brought about by God in no other way, and in no other order, than they have been brought to pass. . . . For if things could have been of another nature, or have been determined to operation in another way, so that the order of nature would have been different, then God's nature would also be different from what it is now" (Part I, Prop. 33, and Dem.). "That each thing is what it is, depends simply on God's decree and will" (*Ibid.*, Schol. 2). To conceive God as free to produce, or not to produce, things, or as free to produce them in any order or way, would be to attribute to him not a perfection, but an imperfection. Determination to self-manifestation or self-expression is not a limit upon God's freedom, but the very nature of perfect freedom.

Thirdly, each thing not only 'expresses' God, but does so *in a definite and determinate way*¹ peculiar to itself. Indeed, each is called a *mode*, just because it has a definite existence, or reveals God in a *way* or *manner* which nothing else could. If A could reveal God in the way in which B does, then its existence would be that of B, and not that which it now has. "Particular things are nothing save affections of God's attributes, or modes by which God's attributes are expressed in a definite and determinate way" (Part I, Prop. 25, Coroll.). Thus while a thing is not understood, until it is related to the principle of all existence, yet this principle does not 'devour its offspring,' but endows each particular thing and being with that peculiar existence, or mode of existence, which differentiates it from every other part of Nature. Spinoza even conceives of each object as having a certain definite individuality of its own—not as against God, for no thing or person has any individuality *against* God, but

¹ "*Certo et determinato modo*" is a phrase which, I should say, Spinoza uses hundreds of times, in describing how each particular thing is determined by God to exist and energeise. Evidently he thought it of some importance.

as against the other things in Nature, these being no less a part of the whole than it is itself. Thus to know each object is, at the same time, to know its function in Nature, or the mode in which the real is revealed in and through it. And functions, or modes of existence, do not, as we have already seen, go according to species or genera. It is not enough, to say that things have different modes of existence, or reveal God differently, according as they are inorganic objects, or plants, or animals, or men. This is part of the truth, but a part which, taken alone, is very misleading. The function, and mode of existence, of one plant is not *the same* as that of another, neither is one man's mode of existence, or his reality, identical with that of another. Each thing has its own definite and determined nature—not in spite of the dependence of each upon the whole, but in virtue of such dependence. To understand the particular through these relations which constitute it a *definite part* of the universe is the task of science and of philosophy.

These leading principles, then, seem to me conclusive regarding Spinoza's general point of view. They can be supported, however, by explicit statements, in which he not only admits that difference is consistent with unity, but treats it as the necessary counterpart of unity ; statements, that is to say, in which he contends that all things are perfect, or real, in so far as each is a necessary part of the whole, and yet that each has not the same, or an equal reality (or perfection), and *could not have*, if it were to enter into a coherent order, and constitute along with others *universam Naturam*. Take, first of all, an idea which we find in his philosophy as early as the *Cogitata Metaphysica*, that the universe and all things in it, even those which we call material, are alive, nay alive with God. Such an idea lies open to the objection, that it obliterates all distinctions in the vain attempt to reach a mystical unity in which there are none ; and that by ascribing life to all things it places all finite things and beings on the same level, or even makes each of them divine. Spinoza himself, however, answers this objection by anticipation (*Ethics*, Part 2, Prop. 13, Schol.): "All particular things (*Individua*) are animate,

though in different degrees. For of every thing there is necessarily an idea in God, of which God is the cause, in the same way as in the case of the human body; and thus whatever we have said regarding the idea of the human body must necessarily be said regarding the idea of any thing. Yet this affords no ground for denying that ideas differ from one another as the objects themselves do, and that one is more excellent than another, and contains more reality, according as the object of the one is more excellent than the object of the other, and contains more reality." Thus the idea (or the soul) of the human body does not cease to be distinguishable, and different, from the idea of other things, although the idea of each exists only in and through God. For ideas and objects alike differ in the degree of their reality. The reality of anything, or the *kind* of life, or soul, which it has, is to be estimated, as Spinoza often says, by the number of qualities which characterise it, or (as he puts it in other passages) by its power of acting and of suffering, but especially of acting. The more energies and capacities it has, "the more things it is fitted for," the more reality or perfection does it have. Thus, if all things are alive with, and through the power of, God, while each has all it needs to attain its own perfection, they all differ from one another in the forms in which their life expresses itself, or in the things for which they are fitted. The perfection of each object depends upon its place in the whole, and is determined through the unity of Nature to have its own definite and distinctive capacities. The reality of an object is measured by the number of properties it has, these being the way, and the degree, in which it expresses the principle of the Universe. Thus all created things constitute a whole which is essentially 'coherent' and 'concatenated' in all its parts; but being *parts* of a whole, they must differ in their qualities, powers, and degrees of reality, as a unity of identical parts is inconceivable and impossible even for God to think or will.

This general idea of unity as expressing itself necessarily in difference Spinoza does not work out in detail, except in one or two spheres. In the main he regards the detailed

development of this as the work which Natural Science is called upon to accomplish, and in the *Tract. de Intell. Emend.* he has given valuable suggestions regarding the principles and the method of such an enquiry. His own applications of the principle are for the most part within the spheres of Ethics, Politics, and Religion. Strongly metaphysical as he is, his chief interest in Metaphysic is that he may thereby secure a stable foundation for man's practical life. Thus it is natural that the difference upon which he chiefly dwells should be that between the virtuous man and the man who is led by his passions.

The *proof* of *this* distinction is not possible without a careful study of the characteristic qualities or the powers of each of these moral opposites. Such an analysis alone furnishes that 'adequate idea' of the question, which brings with it a self-evidencing certitude. And this *proof* (which forms the chief problem in the last three books of the *Ethics*) will occupy us immediately. But the point before us at the moment is, whether Spinoza does treat the immanent cause, or principle of unity, which necessarily animates all things, as destroying the possibility of any moral distinction between the virtuous and the vicious. That is to say, does he himself believe—putting aside, for the moment merely, the question, whether he has good grounds for the belief or not—that the existence of all things in and through God makes goodness no more real, or powerful, than badness, and gives to the wicked the same title to exist as it gives to the righteous? This conclusion would seem to follow from what has already been proved regarding the non-moral character of the universe as a whole, its apparent indifference to virtue, and the fact that the bad man acts through the same necessity as the good. Yet there can be no doubt that Spinoza neither draws this conclusion, nor recognises its validity. He holds, on the contrary, that such a moral distinction springs from the essential nature of the things distinguished, and, instead of being annulled by the universal activity of God, is thereby alone rendered possible. In a striking passage (*Letter* 23, formerly 36) he says, "I wish it to be noted that although the works of the righteous (that is,

of those who have a clear idea of God, by relation to which all their deeds, and even their thoughts, are determined), and of the wicked (that is, of those who do not possess the idea of God, but only the ideas of earthly things in relation to which their deeds and thoughts are determined), and indeed of all things which exist, necessarily issue from God's eternal laws and decrees, and continually depend upon God, yet they differ from one another not only in degree, but also in essence. For although the mouse equally with the angel, and sadness as well as joy, depend upon God, yet the mouse cannot be a sort of angel, nor sadness a kind of joy." And in a still more suggestive passage (*Letter* 19, formerly 32) he says, "It is indeed true that the wicked express the will of God in their own way; yet they are not, therefore, to be by any means put on the same level as the good; for the greater the perfection anything has, the more does it partake of divinity, and the more does it express God's perfection. And as the good have immeasurably more perfection than the bad, their *virtus* cannot be put on the same footing as the *virtus* of the bad, since the bad are destitute of the divine love which issues from the knowledge of God, and by which we are, humanly speaking, said to be the servants of God. Nay, since the bad do not know God, they are only a tool in the hand of the workman, which is of service without knowing it, and is worn out in that service; while the good, on the contrary, serve with intelligence (*conscii serviunt*), and by their service attain to higher perfection." These passages are conclusive, as regards Spinoza's *own* interpretation of his principles. And they simply put in an emphatic way the result of the course of thought which is worked out in detail in the *Ethics*. The further question as to the intrinsic value of the train of thought so developed will occupy our attention directly.

Meantime, another distinction which Spinoza recognises within the unity of the whole deserves remark, namely, that between man and the lower animals. His view on this point is apt to be hidden from us by the fact that he makes use of the term '*appetitus*' to express both the desires of the animals and human desires. Probably this double use of the

term arises partly from antagonism to the Cartesian view, that the lower animals are both irrational and insentient, and is intended as a protest against such a severing of the threads that link all creation together. One who held that even the distinction between 'dead matter' and intelligent beings was not an absolute separation or opposition, since even material objects might be said to have a soul, was little likely to be attracted by the doctrine that animals have no souls. Accordingly Spinoza recognises a much closer affinity between man and the lower animals than Descartes had done. Yet he is far from identifying them, or even treating their '*appetitus*' as the same. Though maintaining that animals can feel but cannot think, while men can do both, he holds that even the feeling which is common to both is not the same in each.

"The emotions of the animals which are called irrational, differ as much from the emotions of men, as their nature differs from human nature. Both the horse and the man, indeed, are moved by the desire of procreation, but in the former case the desire is an equine one, in the latter human. So also the instincts and appetites of insects, of fishes, and of birds must each have their own peculiar character" (Part 3, Prop. 57, Schol.). From the same point of view we are told, "Reason teaches us the necessity, if we seek our welfare, of uniting with men, but not with brutes, or with objects whose nature is different from human nature; but the same right which they have over us we have over them. Yea, because the right of each thing is defined by the *virtus*, or power, of each, men have far more right over the brutes than they have over men. I do not indeed deny that brutes feel (*sentire*); but I deny that, on that account, it is not lawful for us to look to our advantage, and make use of them as we please, and treat them as best suits us; since they do not agree in nature with us, and their emotions are of a different nature from human emotions" (Part 4, Prop. 37, Schol. 1). "Every one looks with admiration upon traits in the animals which he would execrate and regard with aversion if displayed by men, such as the wars of bees and the jealousy of doves. For while these are forbidden to men, we regard the animals as all the more perfect because they are thus endowed" (*Letter* 19, formerly 32).

That is to say, the perfection of an animal consists in the qualities which constitute it an animal, and not a man, or a stone; and in the same way the perfection of a man depends upon the distinctive desires and capacities which differentiate

him from animal and stone alike, and even from every other individual man. These distinctions are the necessary expression of that life which "lives through all life," and are not annulled by it.

To sum up the main points of the argument in this chapter. We have seen that all things which exist are perfect. They have indeed no absolute or self-complete perfection; for such perfection belongs only to the whole system of existence, or the all-real. But they share in this perfection, in so far as they are parts, and necessary parts, of the whole. They have all the reality which parts can have, and they could only be other than they are were the whole order to which they belong different from what it is. Where nothing is contingent, or accidental, but all is determined necessarily according to the laws of God's nature, nothing can be *imperfect*. Thus it is not reverence, but the presumptuousness of ignorance, which leads men to speak of Nature missing her way, or of God's will being thwarted by forces, or persons, outside of him. How is this even conceivable, when the very existence of these forces, or persons, would at once cease were it not for God's continuous activity? The actual being of things proves them to have all the reality which they can have, for this is just God's life and energy expressing itself in a definite and determinate way. And while we may *imagine* things to be more perfect, this is possible only because we refer them to abstract general classes, and do not grasp the actual essence of each thing as it is in and for God, or as it is linked to the universal order of Nature. Did we really know the thing as it is in itself, *i.e.* in the determinate mode in which it expresses God, we would not define it, as the logicians do, through genera and difference, but through the actual essence of the thing, that is through the necessary relationship in which it stands to everything else in virtue of its dependence on God. It is this 'actual essence' of the particular thing which gives it the reality and perfection it enjoys. Its peculiar place and function in the common order of existence is its perfection; but harmony with some class notion, which, by grasping together only common features of things, explains no

particular existence, does not express the perfection of anything.

On the other hand, there are also two further points of view from which we may legitimately speak of the perfection of things. (1) We may compare them with one another as regards the measure or degree of reality they have. In this respect one will be *more perfect* than another, if it displays more qualities or capacities, or capacities of a higher kind. Yet the less perfect in such a comparison will not thereby be shown to be in any way *imperfect*. For to be imperfect means that the thing is other than it might, and should, have been; and this is impossible, seeing that the effect cannot be changed unless the cause is changed, and the cause is ultimately God's necessary self-manifestation. If the 'less perfect' thing had the qualities of the 'more perfect,' it would cease to be what it is, and to fill the place in Nature which it does fill. To ascribe to trees the power of talking like men, would be, not to increase their perfection, but to destroy it altogether. Trees that could talk would be neither trees nor men, but the product of the same 'confused thought' or imagination, which can think a circle with the properties of a square.

Admitting, however, that those things which have *more* qualities, or powers, are 'more perfect,' or (to use the synonymous term which Spinoza on the whole prefers) 'more real' than those which have fewer; on what grounds can we go further, and distinguish between *higher* and *lower* qualities, or forms of reality, in things? Is not all reality necessarily the same in kind, differing only in degree? Spinoza frequently uses language which seems to involve this. Yet, on the other hand, he frequently speaks of things as differing from one another not only in existence, but also in essence, thus implying that distinction is not merely quantitative. Indeed purely quantitative distinction is to him an *imaginative* mode of thought. And his two ways of speaking are easily seen to be consistent, if we consider that all reality is ultimately one, or self-complete, and even self-identical; and yet that each part of the whole must be qualitatively, or in essence, different from the other parts.

From the former point of view, "everything is animate," though "in different *degrees*"; from the latter, the difference between the nature of one thing and that of another is not a question of more or less, or of quantity as we see it on a first glance, but a difference of essence or distinctive power. *More or less* when used of Reality is not a quantitative, as opposed to a qualitative, or an extrinsic, as contrasted with an intrinsic, denomination, but a comparison of things according to the common principle in virtue of which each lives and moves and exercises its own distinctive functions. "Whatever exists, expresses God's nature, or essence, *in a definite and determinate way*; that is, whatever exists, expresses in a definite and determinate way God's power, which is the cause of all things, and thus from that object a certain effect must follow" (Part I, Prop. 36, Dem.).

This is the second, and the more adequate, point of view from which we may judge things to be more or less real. Indeed the comparison of them with one another is seen on analysis to be possible only through the conception of a principle which reveals itself in all of them, but reveals itself in each in a definite and determinate way. If there were no unity immanent in all, there could be no 'common measure' for distinguishing the 'more' from the 'less,' either in quantity or in quality; while if this immanent principle did not express itself, and necessarily express itself, in each object and being in a definite and determinate way, a comparison of them as parts of the whole with one another would be equally impossible. The 'identity of indiscernibles' is precisely the kind of identity which Spinoza seeks to banish from human thought; God himself does not know abstract universals, but only particulars in their difference and variety. And to grasp each object through its own essence, or definition, that is, through the definite and distinctive nature which it has through and for God, is the true end of human knowledge.

Thus it is not enough to say, (1) that all things because they exist are real and perfect. This is true, but only a part of the truth. Nor (2) is it enough to add, that some things are more real, or have greater perfection, than others,

though each has all the reality which *it* can have. For this assertion at once raises the question, how are such comparisons possible ; how can there be a greater and a less, if each object has *all* the perfection possible to it? (3) The answer is to be found by pushing back the enquiry, so as to discover wherein precisely the reality of the particular object consists. And we have already seen that its reality means the *definite way* in which it expresses God. To understand this *modal* existence in each case is the end of all science and philosophy, for only by the slow labour of thought can we assign to the particular the determinate place and character which the Universe has conferred upon it. Thus Spinoza's argument is, that while each object does, in virtue of its intrinsic relation to God, or the whole of Reality, express his qualities, it does so only from a certain point of view, and with more or less adequacy according to the qualities which constitute its nature. While the unity of Nature is immanent in, or organic to, all that exists, this unity does not cancel, but communicates itself in, and gives value to, the differences between things. One object can have a greater degree of perfection than another, and can be *known* as having greater perfection, just because God reveals himself in all, but in each in a peculiar way.

CHAPTER VI.

DIVINE DETERMINATION.

THESE ideas may put us in a position to answer the other question raised on p. 49, namely, Whether the universal immanence and activity of God do not imply that all objects and persons alike are equally determined, and determined in the same way. If God is the cause of all things and beings, so that each is wholly dependent, both for its essence and its existence, on this necessary relation, are we not forced to the conclusion that the nexus between God and man differs nothing from that between God and a piece of matter? Can we conceive of human action and volition as necessitated according to universal laws, without at the same time putting these energies on the same plane as the movement of the stars, or the growth of the seed?

The difficulty involved in such a universal determinism has proved the chief obstacle to the acceptance of Spinoza's philosophy; for Schleiermacher's enthusiastic recognition of the idea of absolute dependence as the essence of all religion has secured but few disciples. Yet the 'stone of stumbling' can be, I think, in great part removed, by giving due weight in our interpretation of Spinoza's thought to the various elements that enter into it.

The argument of the *Ethics* undoubtedly is, that the mind's activities are no less determined, or necessitated, than the fall of the stone, or the flow of the stream. In neither case is there any non-determination, or uncaused efficiency. Such non-determination could mean only contingency or chance; and contingency is not a quality which is predicable

of things as real, but only a term by which we indicate *our ignorance* of the real nature and conditions of things in any particular case. Thus ideas, emotions, desires must have definite causes, through which alone they can be explained, no less than the swing of the pendulum, or the flight of the eagle. There is no less determination in the one case than in the other, for all forth-putting of energy in any form is God's power manifesting itself in a definite and determinate way. So strongly is Spinoza impressed with this, that he not only speaks of the human mind as acting according to fixed laws, but even describes it in the *De Intell. Emend.* as a kind of 'spiritual automaton.'

Yet it would be an entire misreading of his attitude, to conclude that the laws according to which the mind is determined to think are, therefore, the same in kind as those which regulate the fall of a stone or the instincts of a bee. They agree so far, viz. in the fact that they are equally necessary and universal; but they are none the less different in character. For though both the mind and the stone are determined or necessitated, yet the one is determined to *think*, the other to *fall*. The one is a spiritual determination, the other a physical one.

The importance of this distinction will appear if we recall to mind some considerations upon which Spinoza lays stress. In the first place, he holds—and the main end of the *Ethics* is to prove it—that while (as we have seen) the popular conception of freedom, which means an indifferent choice between alternative courses of action, is an illusion, arising from the fact that men are conscious of their actions, but not of the causes from which they spring; yet there *is* a real freedom, a *vera libertas*, capable of attainment by man, and incapable of being attained by any other object. This true freedom is not ruled out by the inevitable necessity of all things, for such necessity is the essential condition of freedom, not its opposite. Compulsion alone would be incompatible with such freedom, for compulsion means action from a necessity external to the nature of the agent itself; while freedom is also action from necessity, but from the necessity of the agent's own nature, *i.e.* action from *self-*

determination. Now, as man's power to think constitutes his distinctive activity, the exercise of this is his true freedom. The power to think truly or adequately is the nature of human reason, for "it is of the nature of Reason to view things not as contingent but as necessary, that is, to grasp them *sub quadam aeternitatis specie*" (Part 2, Prop. 44, and Coroll. 2). And as the idea of each body, or of any particular actually existent thing, necessarily involves God's eternal and infinite essence, "the human mind has an adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence; and it follows from this, that God's infinite essence, and his eternity, are known to all" (*Ibid.*, Prop. 47, and Schol.). Thus the power to think truly, with all that is involved therein,—namely the power to understand the necessary causes of things, the power of knowing one's own nature in and through God, and the power of loving God simply because such love alone is man's true life and happiness—all this is open to man as man and to no other finite object.

(2) We ought to bear in mind further, that for Spinoza the determination of a thing, or being, by God stands on quite a different footing from the determination of one finite thing, or being, by another. In the former case, we have the whole and complete cause, in the latter only a partial cause, or a part of the cause. In the one case, to use Spinoza's language, we have the cause both of the *essence* and of the *existence* of the particular thing, in the other, at the most, only *one* of the causes of its *existence*. The latter is indeed, according to him, not an ultimate cause, even of that part of the effect which can be traced directly to it; for while "nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow" (Part I, Prop. 36), the reason for this is not the thing's own finality, but the fact that "whatever exists expresses God's nature, or essence, in a definite and determinate way, that is, whatever exists expresses in a definite and determinate way the power of God," this power being the efficient cause in all cases. Yet it is, in Spinoza's judgment, none the less important to distinguish between the power which *constitutes* the distinctive nature and activities of each thing and being, and the forces embodied in other existences which

may affect it from without. The former is that immanent determination which gives the thing, or being, a definite character, or individuality, or 'soul,' by allowing, or rather by enabling, it to claim and to fill a definite place in the universe. Because this is the determination of the thing *to be itself*, it cannot be in any respect a menace to its life and essential activities. Whatever threatens these, or tends to destroy the thing's existence, must come not from within, or from God's power as expressed in the nature of this particular thing, but from without, or from forces through which other objects express God.

It is for Spinoza then, a 'common notion,' or necessary truth, that the divine determination which imparts to each thing its definite and determinate nature and capacities, must be the basis of the *virtus* of that thing. He uses *virtus* in this wide sense, applying it to objects as well as to men, and even to God himself. Thus the *virtus* of anything is simply the power, or powers, by which it is able to maintain, assert, and unfold its distinctive existence. So far as this *virtus* is not limited, or overborne, by any power alien to the essential qualities of the thing we may speak of it as free. This general truth Spinoza applies also to man. Man cannot be a *causa sui*, or self-determined, as God is. He is not a self-complete whole, but only a part. "His essence does not necessarily involve existence." So while all determination is for God self-determination, since there is nothing extraneous to *him* which might affect him, this can never be the case with man. He is determined to be, or (if the phrase seem less objectionable) he is *constituted*, a man, but not at the same time a society, a horse, or an atmosphere. He is, therefore, subject to many influences which are other than himself, and which may threaten, as well as subserve, his life and activities from without. For, as one part among others, he may be determined by forces which weaken or suppress his peculiar activities, or subordinate them to ends alien to his own nature. Thus his freedom will depend, not on his independence of all things external to him, but on the measure in which he can find, and expand, his own determinate nature in and through them. In other words, the

controversy regarding human freedom and human slavery does not have meaning when we are dealing with the constitutive or immanent activity of God, which makes the individual what he is. In this case, freedom and slavery are one. The more points of relation there are between God and man the more free the personality, for every such relation is a fresh *virtus* or *potentia* over men and things. The absence of such determination would mean, not liberty and individuality, but impotence, extinction, nothingness. He that *is* not cannot be free; and he that is not, through reality as a whole, a determinate somewhat, *is not*. Only upon this primary condition of all existence, can we even ask the question wherein consists the liberty, or self-determination, of man, and under what conditions is he enslaved?

(3) The divine determination of man is of so complex a nature, that the freedom of man is not an *innate quality*, but a power which is only gradually attained under definite conditions. No one is born blessed, or free, or rational. "If men were born free," we are told in *Ethics*, Part 4, Prop. 68, "they would form no notion of good and bad, so long as they were free"; for as true freedom would exclude all evil, and the knowledge of good and evil are correlative, the notion of good would then be equally impossible. But the hypothesis of the proposition itself, it is immediately added, is an impossible one, arising from the abstract view of man which seeks to separate him from all other things in the world. In other words, the very notion of man as born intellectually, or spiritually, free is a self-contradiction, no less than the notion of a square circle, or of a talking tree is. Man may *become* free, by prolonged and active discipline, by processes of education and thought, by well-directed restraints and constraints; but in this way alone does the divine power *make* him virtuous, and blessed, or necessitate his freedom. Thus such necessitation is nothing different from the highest exercise of man's own powers, and the inner effort of development which is involved in them.

Now if we give due weight to the three considerations of which we have spoken, two conclusions seem justified: (1) That the divine determination of a thing, or being, is not an

intrusion upon, or a menace to, the nature of that thing, or being ; but is, on the contrary, that which constitutes it what it is, giving it a place in the universe of reality, and powers, both actual and potential, to express and realise its nature. And (2) the kind of divine determination will depend on, or (to speak more accurately) will be expressed in, and will vary with, the nature of the thing or being determined. Not only is the stone determined to be a stone, and not an elephant, or a mind, but it can be affected only in the way which its peculiar nature admits of ; as, similarly, a mind cannot be moved, or influenced, save through thoughts or ideas, this being the only kind of determination to which *it* is amenable. The distinctive qualities of each thing indicate what divine production involved in that particular case, and the kind of relation in which it stands to the general system of things.

Spinoza's argument, then, is, that in dealing with man we must regard the divine immanent activity which has constituted him what he is, and which maintains him in being, not as a force alien to human individuality, but as the essential condition of it, and the secret of that unquenchable impulse to pass ever from a less to a greater perfection, which all real individuality involves. Such necessitation as this, is not from without, but from within, not from foreign forces, but from our own nature. To regard it as hostile to the real nature, and free energies, of man is to confound self-determination with constraint. It is to treat the mind as an indeterminate somewhat, which is free to know, or not to know, free to think as it will under all conditions. But a mind which was free in this way would be no mind. It would have the power of knowing neither the world, nor itself, nor God. And as a mind which is not *necessitated to know*, has no real power, neither has it any true freedom, as real freedom is always *potentia*.

Thus the dependence of man upon God, while it is no less absolute than that of the stone, or the animal, is of a different nature, and expresses itself in other terms. For the nature of the dependence shows itself in the peculiar activities which constitute the nature of each thing. And as we saw

in the last chapter, the nature of any animal is different from human nature ; for God's power in man expresses itself not simply in sensation and nutrition, but in thought and desire, in consciousness and reason, in the knowledge and love of God, in the understanding of natural objects, and in the sense of a good in which all human beings may share. These functions of existence are peculiar to human nature, or to that power of God which manifests itself in man. Nothing else in nature can think itself, or things, or God ; nothing else is stirred by ideas of things in the present, the past, or the future ; nothing else is subject to the same emotions or passions, or enjoys the same power of controlling them ; nothing else can conceive a social welfare and seek it, or make common laws and enforce them ; and nothing else can conceive itself as eternal. These spiritual activities are *sui generis*. They do not need to be justified by reducing them to functions of matter, nor *could* they be thus justified. They stand in their own right, that is, in the right of that divine power which has given them *might* to be what they are. And they must be explained through themselves, through their own nature and constitution, or through the power which God has vested in them.

Spinoza thus lends no countenance to the view, that if God be the universal immanent cause, his determination of the human intellect and will can differ in no wise from his determination of any mechanical object. For on his view the cause of a spiritual nature's existence cannot be the obstacle to its essential activities, or to that highest exercise of them in which its freedom consists.

Nay, in more than one passage, the argument is carried further, and it is pointed out that, so far from material objects being the explanation of thought and desire as well as of themselves, we might with more reason reverse the process. In reply to Blyenbergh (*Letter* 21, formerly 34) Spinoza says, "As for your assertion that I by making men so dependent on God, make them like elements, herbs, and stones, that sufficiently shows that you have a very mistaken conception of my view, and that you confuse through the imagination, matters which can only be apprehended by the

intellect. For, if you had grasped by pure intelligence, what dependence on God means, you would certainly not be of opinion that things are, through their dependence on God, dead, corporeal, and imperfect. . . . ; on the contrary, you would hold that, for that reason, and in so far as they depend upon God, they are perfect. So that, we best understand this dependence, and necessary operation through God's decree, when we have regard not to stocks and plants, but to the most intelligible and the most perfect created things." That is to say, if we wish to know the meaning of the universal necessity to which every part of existence is subject, and even of that purely mechanical form of it which regulates stocks and stones, we must look for it, not simply in those stocks and stones, but in the mind and will, the intellectual, moral, and social life of man. This life, as we saw in the last chapter, expresses greater 'reality' or 'perfection,' and it affords therefore a more adequate explanation of the principle of existence. So far then should we be from understanding such 'more real' modes of existence by reducing them to the simpler or less real, that the opposite course were the more promising one.

This much at least has, then, been shown, that the divine determination of man can be rightly apprehended only by an analysis of the nature and constitution of the powers, mental and bodily, which are vested in him. The bond which unites him to God, and makes him necessarily a part of the whole, does not extinguish his claim to be, and to act as, an intelligent and moral being. On the contrary, in this way alone is the claim made good. For only so does man obtain the *power* to exercise such activities.

Further, it has also been shown that, while all dependence is necessary, not all dependence is mechanical. There is no ground for regarding the necessity which makes physical objects to be what they are, and to act as they do, as the exemplar of all necessity whatever. Rather, the greater the necessity which characterises any thing or being, the more reality is it endowed with ; and the more real it is, the more freedom does it enjoy, for it will then have all the more power to act, and be the less liable to suffer. Thus the

highest type, or the truth, of necessary relation Spinoza finds, not in the physical world, though it is expressed there in its own form inviolably, but in rational beings, and especially in the man in whom freedom is perfected, because he 'cannot help' loving virtue and loving God.

CHAPTER VII.

THE 'CONATUS SESE CONSERVANDI,' AND THE GOOD.

SPINOZA accepts it as axiomatic that an individual does, under all circumstances, seek his own welfare and happiness, or what he conceives as such. If he ever renounce an apparent good, it can only be in the hope of thereby securing a greater good, or escaping a greater evil, in the future. All action, or forbearance from action, is the effort (*conatus*) of a man to realise himself. This law holds good of human nature universally, being no less valid of the saint than of the sinner, and exemplified equally by the altruist and the egoist. *Self*-renunciation, instead of being a virtue, is an impossibility. A man can no more desire what presents itself to him as, on the whole, the lesser of two goods, or the greater of two evils, than he can think a river with the properties of a tree. Thus, though there is a world of difference between the virtuous man and the vicious, the difference is not that the latter is more self-seeking than the former, or that he makes greater claims upon the world for satisfaction. Both alike are seeking what they regard as their happiness.

This impulse toward self-preservation and self-realisation, Spinoza, following the Stoics and other writers, calls the *conatus sese conservandi*. It is for him the essence of each thing and being. Everything strives to maintain itself in existence, and to resist whatever tends to lessen, or destroy, its being. Thus while each thing is necessarily part of a whole system, it is also a positive self-affirming unity, with its own peculiar life and activity. "For although each

thing is determined by another particular thing to exist in a definite way, yet the force by which each thing continues in existence follows from the eternal necessity of God's nature" (Part 2, Prop. 45, Schol.). Thus the existence of a thing cannot be terminated from within, since "each thing endeavours, as far as in it lies, to persevere in its own being" (*Ethics*, Part 3, Prop. 6). Whatever threatens or destroys it, must come from without, as "the power of each thing, or the *conatus* by which, either alone, or along with other things, it does, or endeavours to do, anything, is nothing save the given or actual essence of the thing itself" (*Ibid.*, Prop. 7, Dem.). It follows also that "the *conatus* by which each thing endeavours to continue in its own existence involves no definite but an indefinite time" (*Ibid.*, Prop. 8); that is to say, the duration of its existence cannot be determined simply by considering the thing itself, and its own endeavour to maintain itself in being. To determine this, we must take into account at the same time the relations in which it stands to the other things which may affect its existence and its activity.

This general principle Spinoza holds to be embodied in man no less than in other objects. For he also is constituted an individual by that *conatus sese conservandi* which, in each thing, expresses God's power in a definite and determinate way. But if the general principle is the same, it is the same with a difference. For the *conatus* of a thing is just the actual essence of that thing. And since, as we have already seen, the essence of a man is different from that of an animal, and still more from that of a stone, so also must his *conatus* be. A material object in motion or at rest expresses its *conatus in suo esse perseverandi* by resisting, and reacting upon, whatever would tend to change its state of motion or rest. A plant, also, has its own way of asserting itself against an unsuitable environment, and of making the world subserve the maintenance of its life and growth. So also with an animal, in which the power of maintaining its existence, and exercising capacities is immensely greater. And, in the case of man, the *conatus*, or will-to-live, is of still greater compass. The life which is open to him is

indefinitely richer in content, and more varied in exercise. { His endeavour to realise himself involves powers, intellectual, moral, social, and religious, which have been bestowed by Nature upon nothing else. And it deserves to be specially noted that as man consists of a mind as well as of a body, he differs from other things not only in the nature of the { *conatus in suo esse perseverandi*, but also in the fact that he alone is *conscious* of this self-realising impulse. "The Mind, both in so far as it has clear and distinct ideas, and in so far as it has confused ones, endeavours to persist in its own existence with a certain indefinite duration, and is conscious of this its endeavour" (Part 3, Prop. 9). "All men have an *appetitus* of seeking their own advantage, and *are conscious thereof*" (Part I, App.).

Instead, however, of following up with keenness this idea, that man has not only a *conatus*, but is also conscious of it, Spinoza seems to take pains to discount it altogether, and to represent consciousness as an insignificant, or irrelevant, factor in the case. For while Will (*voluntas*) is defined as the *Conatus* of the individual's nature when it is referred to the Mind alone, and Impulse (*Appetitus*) as this *Conatus* when it is referred at once to the Mind and the Body; Desire (*Cupiditas*), we are told, is generally referred to men in so far as they are conscious of their *Appetitus*, and so should be defined as *Appetitus* with the consciousness of it (*Ethics*, Part 3, Prop. 9, Schol.). But such consciousness does not make any real difference, for "whether a man is conscious of his *appetitus* or not, the *appetitus* still remains one and the same" (*Ibid.*, Part 3, App., § 1).

Now the usual interpretation of this language is, that the *Conatus* which works in man is a blind unconscious force, a will-to-live which makes use of man as its instrument, and which he is powerless to resist or to change. Consciousness is but an accident of its operation, an epi-phenomenon of its activity in a human body. If this view of Spinoza's teaching be sound, the essence of this universal *conatus* can be learned as well from any other object as from man. But it may be contended, it seems to me, that not only is Spinoza's language susceptible of precisely the opposite interpretation,

but also that such an interpretation alone is compatible with the leading principles of his philosophy. To take even the passage last mentioned (Part 3, App., § 1). What Spinoza is contending is not that there is no difference between *appetitus* in general and human desire, but that there is no difference between a '*HUMANUM appetitum et Cupiditatem*.' It would be, he says, a simple tautology to explain *cupiditas* by *appetitus*; for *appetitus* in man is just *cupiditas*, it either is or may be conscious. "Instead of explaining *Cupiditas* by *appetitus*, I preferred to define it so as to include under it all the *conatus* of human nature, which we signify by the name of *appetitus, cupiditas, vel impetus*." And this definition is (§ 1) that "*cupiditas* is the very essence of a man in so far as he is conceived as determined to do something, from any given affection of him." Without this last clause, Spinoza says, it would not follow that the Mind *can be conscious* of its *Cupiditas* or *Appetitus*; and so in order to include the cause of this consciousness it was necessary to add it. "Here therefore I understand by *Cupiditas* all the *conatus, impetus, appetitus, and volitiones*, which differ according to the changing constitution of the same man, and not seldom are so opposed to one another, that the man is drawn in different directions, and does not know whither to turn."

The points of this argument seem to me to be (1) that all human endeavour, or the *conatus in suo esse perseverandi*, in so far as it applies to man, is *Cupiditas*, whether it be called a *conatus*, an *appetitus*, a *volitio*, or an *impetus*. All the impulses by which man is moved are ultimately of one kind. And (2) Of every *cupiditas* a man is, or at least may be, conscious, since it springs not simply from the essence of his nature, but from the essence of his nature as determined from some affection of it, and such an affection can exist only as he is aware of it. "There is no affection of the Body, of which we cannot form a clear and distinct conception" (Part 5, Prop. 4).

This interpretation, moreover, is alone consistent with ideas that have already been explained. The *conatus* of each thing differs as much from that of another as the

essence of each does. It is, in fact, the essence of the thing finding expression for itself. Thus, if the *appetitus* of a man were the same as that of an animal or a stream, consciousness *would* make no difference to the content or character of this *conatus*, and would be merely an epi-phenomenon. Spinoza's argument, on the other hand, is that consciousness is itself part of that essential difference by which man is distinguished from other objects, and that all impulses, whether they are consciously present to the mind or not, are intrinsically different in man from what they are in anything else, and admit of being thought and willed. For man consists of Mind as well as Body (Part 2, Prop. 13, Coroll.), and it is the essence of the Mind to think, or to have ideas. Further, as the order and connexion of ideas is the same as the order and connexion of things, there can be nothing taking place in the body of which there is not an idea in the mind. Indeed, "the Mind does not know itself except in so far as it apprehends the ideas of the affections of the body" (Part 2, Prop. 23). And to have ideas, is to exercise an essential activity, seeing that ideas are not made for but by the Mind. "By an idea I understand a conception of the Mind, which the Mind forms because it is a thinking thing. I say a conception rather than a perception, because the name perception seems to indicate that the Mind is affected in a passive way by the object, while a conception seems to express the activity of the Mind" (Part 2, Def. 3). This power of forming ideas, it is to be noted further, is primary and fundamental; for while (Axiom 3) there may be an idea in the Mind without emotions, such as love, desire, etc., these, on the other hand, could not exist unless there were in the same Individual the idea of the object loved, desired, etc.

It seems then a necessary deduction from this, that there can be no desire in a man of which he has not some consciousness. His idea of it may not be adequate or sufficient, but inadequate or confused. He may not have such a reflexive knowledge of it as unites him with the object of his knowledge. But all human desires, whether we call them impulses, appetites, instincts, or volitions, involve

and express thought in some form. To Spinoza all spiritual activities are modes of thought. Self-consciousness, or 'thinking our thoughts,' is not essentially different from the apprehension of a flower, but only a fuller knowledge of what this apprehension involves.

Thus the *conatus sese conservandi* which works in all things, works in man through thought; it takes the form of *Cupiditas*, or of *appetitus* with the consciousness of it. It is a striving through a body which is necessarily the object of a Mind, and through a Mind which cannot but know the affections of the body.

This is corroborated by the idea already noticed, that the virtue or excellence of a thing depends on the nature of the thing. And as the highest virtue of a man is *to know*, the *conatus* which constitutes him must be at least an effort to understand, or a mental activity (see *Ethics*, Part 4, Prop. 26).

Hence to Spinoza the thinking of an impulse, or the consciousness of the *conatus sese conservandi* is a necessary condition of its operation in man. Man not only desires and wills, but is conscious of these desires and volitions. And he can be conscious of a desire only as he finds himself in it. The object of desire is always a form of self-satisfaction, or something which appeals to the individual as promoting his welfare. The end of all desire is within and not without. "By the end for the sake of which we do anything I understand *appetitus*" (Part 4, Def. 7). "No one seeks to preserve his being for the sake of any other thing" (Part 4, Prop. 25).

This may cast light on two other points in Spinoza's teaching, namely, that he draws no distinction between Desire and Will, and that he prefers to speak of the *utile* rather than of the *bonum* as the end of human desire. The first is explained by his opposition to all separation of faculties in human nature, as well as by his antagonism to the popular doctrine that the will is free and undetermined, while desire is necessitated. What he seeks to bring out is, that there is no general power of Will, but only particular volitions, and (2) that these particular volitions are simply desires in which the Mind realises itself. Human desires, whether we call

them appetites, longings, or volitions, are essentially of the same nature. They are *conatus* of self-realisation.

In the second place, why does Spinoza prefer to describe the end of human action as Utility rather than the Good? The consideration of this throws, I think, much light on his point of view, and we must work it out with some fulness. It furnishes an effectual answer to the contention, that the *Conatus sese conservandi* is a blind unconscious force working itself out in man as in any other object.

We have seen that the *conatus sese conservandi* is the essence of each thing and being. It is thus the deepest principle to which any action or desire in man can be referred.

"It is the first and sole foundation of virtue ; for no other principle can be conceived as prior to this, and apart from it no virtue is conceivable" (Part 4, Prop. 22, Coroll.). "As Reason requires nothing contrary to Nature, it requires that each love himself, seek his own advantage, what is really for his advantage, and desire all that which really raises man to greater perfection, and, to speak generally, it requires that each endeavour to maintain his own being as far as possible. This is as necessarily true, as that the whole is greater than its part. Again, as virtue is nothing else than action from the laws of one's own nature, and as no one endeavours to preserve his being except according to the laws of his own nature, it follows in the first place that the foundation of virtue is the very *conatus* of preserving one's own being, and that happiness consists in this, that the man is able to preserve his own being" (Part 4, Prop. 18, Schol.).

Thus a man's utility or advantage consists in whatever enables him to maintain his existence, to develop his powers, and attain the highest perfection of which his nature is capable.

From this point of view, Spinoza's ethical teaching may justly be called Utilitarian. He recognises no higher, or other, end from which an individual may act, than the apprehension of what is of advantage (*utile*) for himself, for, in whatever he does, or leaves undone, he is seeking his own welfare as it presents itself to him. Yet Spinoza's Utilitarianism has little save the name in common with theories like those of J. S. Mill and Herbert Spencer. For the characteristic feature of the so-called Utilitarian school is not its recognition of human utility or advantage, either individual

or social, as the end of action,—a recognition which is to be found in every great moralist,—but its estimation of utility in terms of the pleasure it affords. Spinoza, on the contrary, like Grotius, employs Utility in the general sense of human welfare, and he does not admit that this is synonymous with its pleasure-giving value. He allows, indeed, an important place to *Laetitia*. But then *Laetitia* is not pleasure in the ordinary meaning of the term. It is at once less, and more, restricted. And even if the terms were synonymous, *Laetitia* is not for Spinoza man's happiness or the end of human life. It is the passing from a lesser perfection to a greater, but it is not perfection or felicity itself. For "if *Laetitia* consist in passing to a greater perfection, *Beatitudo* must consist in the Mind being endowed with perfection itself" (Part 5, Prop. 33, Schol.).

Thus while Spinoza is a Utilitarian, his Utilitarianism gets its distinctive character from the interpretation which he gives to the *Utile*. And if the principle that each man should seek his own advantage, or welfare, appeals to him as indubitable, it is because, instead of leading to impiety and immorality, it is the foundation of both religion and morals. The impulse of self-assertion is itself the divine energy in man, and whatever fosters and develops it is lawful and pious. Religion, which has already presented itself to us as absolute dependence upon God, is now seen to be also complete self-affirmation, the sense of power through the knowledge and love of God. It is superstition alone which prompts men

"to think that good which produces sadness, and that bad which brings gladness. . . . Gladness which is controlled by a true regard for our advantage (*utilitas*) can never be bad" (Part 4, App., § 31). "No Deity, nor any but an envious being, will find pleasure in my impotence and harm, or account as virtuous my tears, sighs, fear, and other things of that sort, which are the signs of a weak spirit; on the contrary, the greater the gladness with which we are affected, the greater the perfection to which we pass, that is, the more do we necessarily participate in the divine nature" (Part 4, Prop. 45, Schol.). "How can we," he asks in the *Short Treatise* (Part 2, Ch. 18), "fear God who is himself the supreme good, and from whom all things that have any reality are what they are, and in whom we also live?"

There is no writer, perhaps, who has given a more impressive rendering to the truth that true religion is the *maximising* of human life, the liberation of man's energies, the enlargement of his vision, the highest *acquiescentia animi*.

On the ethical side the same principle finds application. "The more each man endeavours and is able to seek his own advantage, that is, to preserve his own being, the more is he endowed with virtue; and on the other hand, in so far as a man neglects to maintain his own advantage, that is, his own being, he is thus far impotent" (Part 4, Prop. 20). "To attain the reality of that which we assert to be our welfare and our peace, no other principle is necessary, save that we should seek our own advantage—a principle very natural to all things" (*Short Treatise*, Part 2, Ch. 26, § 5). Spinoza accepts this principle in the fullest sense. Nothing that is for a man's advantage can be at variance with morality.

{The *conatus* of the moral life is simply the effort to make the most of one's nature, under the conditions and relations which that nature necessarily involves. The good man is the 'strong' man, the man who understands what is possible for him, and knows wherein his activity can find expression. Thus *virtus* is always a '*potentia*' (Part 4, Def. 8), a capacity, an energy. And all power of acting is *virtus*. Hatred and ignorance are not virtues, because they are not powers, but the absence of power. Even repentance, humility, and shame, though they have a certain value, are not themselves virtues. They express a man's consciousness of his weakness and incapacity, rather than the sense of his power of acting. At most, they are signs,—like the pain of a wound,—that the vital forces are not extinguished.

Self-mortification, then, can have no value, except as it is not really *self*-mortification, but the means to a greater self-satisfaction. It is never virtuous to renounce our own good or to stint ourselves of that which will further it; though it may be virtuous to postpone a present enjoyment for a greater or better in the future, or to refuse to gratify a personal inclination at the cost of social ties which are the condition of our true welfare. But some such justification there must be for every act of self-denial, since mere self-denial—

assuming it to be possible—instead of being the essence of virtue, would cut the root of all virtue, or self-activity. Of the merely negative side of human life, of pain, weakness, sorrow, ignorance, the evil passions, and death, Spinoza has little to say. And this omission is not accidental. It is a deliberate attempt to turn the stream of moral theory into another channel. Many had written eloquently of the vices and miseries of human existence. But few had sought to discover the nature and measure of human power and *virtus*, or to lay bare the *causes* of the weakness and wretchedness they deplored. They had exhausted their genius in satire and depreciation, and by leading men to think meanly of themselves, they had made them mean. Spinoza sets himself to counteract this tendency of thought, and to bring into relief the strength of human nature—its power to control passion, to conquer ignorance, to provide against its own inconstancy, and even to bid defiance to death itself. I dwell little, he says, upon human impotence and much upon human power; I wish men “bene agere et laetari.” Not that he is blind to the place of the negative element in life, as we shall see later. But the negative is not, he maintains, the *truth* of human life. It is not the distinctive activity in which man’s nature reveals itself. It exists only to be overcome, and whatever value it has comes from its function as contributory to a positive self-affirmation.

“He who desires to assist others to enjoy the highest good . . . will beware of harping upon the vices of men, and he will be careful to speak only sparingly of human impotence. But he will enlarge upon human *virtus* or *potentia*, and the way in which it can be perfected. For thus men will seek to live not from fear or aversion, but, under the influence of the emotion of gladness alone, will endeavour to live as far as possible according to the rule of Reason” (Part 4, App., § 25).

Thus the end of human endeavour can only be the unfolding of the individual’s immanent energies. Man is what he can do; while his impotence or passivity is not to be understood through his own nature, but only through the nature of other things and beings. His power is what constitutes his essence, and in the exercise of this power his *virtus* consists. The explication of this *power*

occupies Spinoza in the 4th and 5th Books of the *Ethics*, and the main point he proves is that it is the power of thinking, of knowing oneself, and things, and God. This is the highest activity of which man is capable. It is at once its own end, and the end of all other desires. For it endows man with the power of transforming all, or almost all, that can happen to him into material for his own self-realisation ; it enables him to make the world the instrument of his will, and to transmute the passions which vex him into spiritual energies which enlarge the sphere of his existence.

From this two conclusions can be drawn. (1) Virtue is a self-complete end, desirable in and for itself. (2) Whatever contributes to this end, that is, whatever tends to develop and maintain man's energies, it is lawful for him, nay it is his duty, to seek.

The first of these ideas Spinoza works out in several connections. He points out, for example, that virtue is not, as the crowd suppose, a bondage by which the individual is constrained to something alien to his own nature. "Men in general think themselves free in so far as they are at liberty to obey their lusts, and regard themselves as yielding up their rights, in so far as they are bound to live after the rule of the divine law" (Part 5, Prop. 41, Schol.). But this is the very opposite of the truth. Virtue is not bondage but liberty ; it is activity, energy, self-expression, not subjection to outward causes. Therefore the only reward open to the virtuous man is virtue itself, for this is to his soul what wholesome food is to his body. "*Beatitudo* is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself" (*Ibid.*, Prop. 42). And on the other hand the only punishment of fools is their folly. The bad are afflicted only through their badness. No one has conceived or expressed more clearly than Spinoza the principle that the rewards of right living are not externally attached to it, but necessary consequences of it, and that right living alone makes a man his own master, and enables him to enjoy the highest *acquiescentia animi*.

It is another aspect of the same truth which he brings out when he says that "he who is led by fear and does the good in order to escape the evil, is not led by Reason . . . and

that those who, instead of guiding men by Reason, wish so to constrain them that they will avoid evil rather than love virtue, are simply trying to make others as wretched as themselves" (Part 4, Prop. 63). A desire which springs from Reason makes us, on the contrary, avoid the evil, because we love the good.

This means that in a sense all true virtue is disinterested, but only in a sense. Spinoza does not believe that virtuous action involves the sacrifice of anything which would heighten or maintain the individual's activity; that is, it does not involve the sacrifice of anything that would contribute to his welfare. On the contrary, virtue is his *interest*. Only for this reason is it better, or more worth choosing, than vice. The good man differs from the bad in knowing *himself*, and, therefore what is good for him. The bad man does not know his own interest, because he is ignorant of himself, and of the conditions of his life. Thus a man's devotion to virtue can be *disinterested*, only in the sense that this end has for him no interest outside of itself, for the sake of which he chooses it; and it can be interested only if it is willed as a means to some end external to it. A disinterested devotion to the good of *others* as opposed to a devotion to *our own*, Spinoza always regards as an illusory idea, and an illusion no less fatal to the welfare of the others than to that of the self. The very antithesis on which it rests, as we shall see immediately, runs counter to the whole tenor of his thought. For no one, as he puts it, is so useful to other men as he who knows his own advantage and seeks it.

The second conclusion mentioned above adds force to this argument. Whatever tends to expand or maintain a man's capacities as a whole, it is lawful and a duty for him to seek and to enjoy. Nothing is wrong for him to do, except that which is bad for him. He does not sin against God, or man, unless he sins against himself. And only that is bad which tends to restrain the exercise of his powers, or to prevent their development. In this respect Spinoza seems to breathe the spirit and temper of the Greek race rather than that of his own. For asceticism he has no admiration. To afflict one's body in atonement for the sin of one's soul is to

make oneself twice wretched, for "the more things the body is fit for the higher is the soul's endowment."¹ Thus all that will contribute in any way to the good health and vitality of the human soul, or body, it is the part of the wise man to strive after.

"It is the duty of a wise man to make use of things, and to get as much enjoyment from them as he can (not indeed to enjoy them *ad nauseam*, for this would not be the enjoyment of them). It is, I repeat, the duty of the wise man to refresh and recreate himself with moderate and pleasant food and drink, with the sweet smells and attractions of growing plants, with ornamentation, music, games, plays, and other things of this kind, of which any one can make use without doing harm to another. For the human body is composed of a great many parts, differing in their nature from one another, which stand in constant need of fresh and varied nourishment if the Body as a whole is to be equally fitted for all the activities which can follow from its nature, and if, consequently, the Mind also is to be equally fitted for comprehending many things at once" (Part 4, Prop. 45, Schol.).

Nothing then can be unlawful for man to possess and enjoy so long as it is a positive furtherance of his essential activities.

These ideas enable us to solve a difficulty which inevitably presents itself to a student of Spinoza. The difficulty is, that the ethical categories 'good' and 'bad,' are said in some passages to be only modes of thinking, and to express nothing real in the nature of things; while, in other places, they are treated as of the highest significance. For example, in the Preface to Part 4 of the *Ethics* we are told, that

o "Good and Bad indicate nothing positive in things, considered that is to say in themselves, nor are they anything but modes of thought, or notions which we form from a comparison of things with one another." And yet the greater part of the *Ethics* is occupied with a careful analysis of the distinction between the Good and the Bad, while the 'true

¹ "He who has a Body like an infant or a child fitted for very few tasks, and very much dependent upon outward causes, has a Mind which, considered in itself alone, knows almost nothing of itself or God or things; and, on the other hand, he who has a Body fit for very many activities has a Mind which, considered in itself alone, knows much of itself, and God, and things" (Part 5, Prop. 39, Schol.). Thus to change the body of infancy into a body of manifold activities is (from one side at least) the whole task of human life.

good' is constantly contrasted with other so-called goods, and the *summum bonum* is presented as the only object which affords a wholly adequate satisfaction of human desire. Is there not an evident contradiction here? How can one hold that Good and Bad are nothing real in the nature of things, and yet maintain moral distinctions, and even write a treatise on their significance?

The answer to this difficulty will emerge, if we note why Spinoza generally speaks of the end of human endeavour as the *utile* rather than as the *bonum*. The fact that he does so, cannot be doubted. For while he makes frequent use of the terms 'good,' 'true good,' 'supreme good,' his use of the terms '*utile*,' '*utilius*,' '*summum utile*,' is much more frequent; and when he does employ the former set of phrases he generally hastens to add '*seu utile*.' Moreover, the formal definitions of the Good which he gives, are in terms of the '*utile*.' As instances of many similar passages, we may quote the following :

“To act from virtue is in us nothing else than, according to the guidance of Reason, to act, to live, to preserve one's being (these three phrases have the same meaning) from the motive of seeking our own advantage (*utile*)” (Part 4, Prop. 24). “There is no particular object in the nature of things which is of more advantage (*utilius*) to a man than the man who lives after the guidance of Reason. For that is of most service (*utilissimum*) to a man which most agrees with his own nature, that is a man” (Part 4, Prop. 35, Cor. 1.). “Those things which conduce to a common society of men, or which bring it about that they live in harmony, are advantageous (*utilia*), and those, on the other hand, are bad which produce discord in the State” (Part 4, Prop. 40). Again we are told, in alternative phrase, that “the *summum utile sive bonum* of the Mind is the knowledge of God” (Part 4, Prop. 28, Dem.), that “whatever we judge to be *bonum sive utile* for preserving our being and for enjoying the life of Reason, that it is lawful for us to take for our use, and to make use of in any way we please” (Part 4, App., § 8); and that a free man directly desires “the good, that is to act, to live, and to maintain his being from the motive of seeking his own advantage (*utile*)” (Part 4, Prop. 67, Dem.) Similarly, Spinoza says in the 1st Definition of Part 4, “By good I shall understand that which we know assuredly to be of service (*utile*) to us”; and in Prop. 26 of Part 4 he declares that “the Mind in so far as it makes use of Reason judges nothing to be *utile* for it save that which conduces to understanding.”

Thus, not only does Spinoza treat the 'good' as synonymous with the '*utile*,' but he has a preference for the latter as the more suggestive term. On what grounds? Mainly because it better brings into relief the *relativity* of the good. Nothing is good or bad in itself: its goodness, or badness, depends on the particular things to which it is referred. "It is to be noted," we are told, near the beginning of the *Tract. de Intell. Emend.*, "that good and bad are only used to express a relation; and so, one and the same thing can be, in different relations, called good and bad." "One and the same thing can be at the same time good and bad and also indifferent. For example, Music is good for a melancholy man, bad for a sorrowful one, while for a deaf man it is neither good nor bad" (*Ethics*, Part 4, Pref.). Good in fact always means *good for*, and we cannot pronounce upon the goodness or badness of anything unless we specify at the same time *for what* it is good or bad.

Thus things are not good or bad *considered in themselves*. By 'considered in themselves' Spinoza does not mean things taken apart from their relations, but things conceived in *all* their relations, or in their place in the Universe, or as they are in God. When so conceived they are *necessary*, but neither good nor bad. The latter predicates are applicable to them only if we think of them in some *particular* relation. Fire may be good, or useful, for hardening clay, and bad for hardening wax, but considered in itself in the above sense, that is in its own essential nature, it is neither good nor bad.

In the same way God cannot with strict propriety be called good in himself. For, properly speaking, only that can be good which may also be bad, and in this case the latter is impossible. Neither can aught be called good save in comparison with something else which is not so good. And what in this instance can we put on the same level with a view to a comparison, or what *else* is there with which the principle of all reality can be contrasted? Neither can it be said that God always acts with a view to the good. He acts from the immanent necessity of his nature, but there is no absolute good other than himself to which his energies might be directed.

If then we do call God good, it must be in relation to the particular things and beings which 'live and move' only in him. He is their good, or good to them. "God is called good, because he *conducit* to all things." "No one can hate God," since no one can will his own impotence, or refuse what presents itself to him as his good. Thus while we may speak of the knowledge and love of God as man's supreme good, we have to remember that this is a characterisation of God from a particular point of view, or in a particular relation.

The Good, then, is not for Spinoza, as it is for Plato, an ultimate category of reality. For him Good means good for ~~man~~ or what is advantageous in this particular relation. It is not an ideal end outside of, or determinable apart from, human nature. And if we speak of it as the law ordained by God for men, this can only mean that it is the law imposed by man's nature upon itself, or the conditions of existence which are involved in the human constitution. Thus it depends upon, or is determined by, or is relative to, the distinctive activities of man, for the content of the good depends necessarily on the nature of that *for which* it is good. ↗

Spinoza, however, works out the idea of the relativity of the Good to a further result. We have already had occasion to note his distrust of universal conceptions, his insistence that it is particulars and not universals which are the objects of God's knowledge, and his exaltation of the *conatus sese conservandi* as the principle which imparts to each object its own peculiar nature. It is a natural corollary from this train of thought, that human good must be relative, not merely to human nature in general, but to the nature of each man. Only that is good, or binding, which is good for me, or which is for my advantage. No individual can will, or seek, anything, save that which he judges will satisfy his desires, or expand his powers.

Not only, therefore, is all human good the good of *individuals*, but it exists only as it is willed or desired by them as *their* good. This idea finds expression, from different sides, in two sets of passages which appear at first sight at variance with one another.

In Part 3 of the *Ethics* (Prop. 9, Schol.) we are told that we do not seek, will, desire or long for anything because we judge it good, but that on the contrary we judge anything to be good because we seek, will, desire and long for it. And a little later (Prop. 39, Schol.), the same idea is thus stated, "By *good* I here understand every kind of *Laetitia*, and whatever conduces thereto, and especially that which satisfies desire, of whatever kind that be. And by *bad* every kind of *Tristitia*, and especially that which frustrates desire. For we have already shown that we desire nothing because we judge it to be good, but on the contrary we call that good which we desire ; and so that which we dislike we call bad." But in Part 4 of the *Ethics* (Prop. 19) the opposite view is propounded, "Each man in accordance with the laws of his own nature necessarily desires or is averse to that which he judges to be good or bad."

The explanation of this discrepancy seems to be that in the former case what Spinoza denies is that anything is good or bad in itself, and to be desired for itself ; that only is good which is good *for us*, or good as satisfying some desire, or self-realising effort, in us. While what he affirms in both cases is that to judge anything to be good for us, and to desire it, are two phrases which mean the same thing.

From the consequences of this doctrine he does not shrink. He recognises that it makes each man's good relative to him, and constitutes each the judge of his own advantage.

"Every man judges, or estimates, according to his own ruling passion (*ex suo affectu*) what is good, bad, better, worse, best, or worst. Thus the avaricious man judges plenty of money the best thing, and the want of it the worst. The ambitious man desires nothing so much as glory, and shame is what he most fears. Again, the envious man knows no greater pleasure than another man's unhappiness, while nothing distresses him so much as another's happiness. Thus each man according to his own ruling passion judges a thing to be good or bad, useful or hurtful" (Part 3, Prop. 39, Schol.). Further, "as each man judges *ex suo affectu* what is good, bad, better, and worse, it follows that men can differ from one another as much in their judgments as they do in their emotions" (*Ibid.*, Prop. 51, Schol.).

CHAPTER VIII.

NATURE AND DEFECTS OF THE PASSIONS.

YET the necessary relativity of all good to the individual nature, or its essential subjectivity, is not for Spinoza the last word of Ethics. It is an element in the case, and one upon which he always insists, but he does not regard it as the whole truth. For while all that satisfies desire may be called good, whatever the nature of the desire, it is good, only relative to this particular desire. And the desire itself, in turn, is relative to the individual's nature and welfare. All desires are not of the same value, and so the good which satisfies one desire has not necessarily the same value as that which ministers to another. "The nature of one desire necessarily differs as much from the nature of another, as do the emotions from which they severally spring. There are, therefore, as many sorts of desire as there are of gladness, sadness, love, etc., and consequently, as there are species of objects by which we are affected" (Part 3, Prop. 56, Dem.). The desire of wealth or fame is not to be put on the same level with the supreme '*conatus seu cupiditas*' of the mind (Part 5, Props. 25 and 28).

Thus while Spinoza holds, that no one can desire anything, save that which he judges to be good for him; he does not hold that the individual always understands his own nature, or knows what is best for him. On the contrary, he is often deceived in his judgments, he often misses the satisfaction he seeks, or fails to seek what will afford him a true satisfaction. This implies that, even in the individual himself, there is some other conception of good, or advantage,

than that which each passing desire affords. "The desire of living, exercising one's activities, etc., *beate seu bene*, is the very essence of the man, that is, the *conatus* by which each man endeavours to preserve his being" (Part 4, Prop. 21, Dem.). Just because he is a man he has the power of setting before himself a conception of his true welfare. "A man could neither be nor be conceived if he had not the power of rejoicing in this *summum bonum*" (Part 4, Prop. 36, Schol.). Through this consciousness of a perfect, or complete, good, he is able to resist some desires in the interest of a fuller realisation of himself. For "no one rejoices in blessedness, because he has bridled his emotions, but on the contrary the power of controlling one's inclinations springs from blessedness itself" (Part 5, Prop. 42, Dem.). For the same reason, he has the power of refusing to gratify the wish for a present pleasure, if the attainment of an abiding happiness in the future would thereby be precluded. And he even has the power of subordinating his personal likes, and dislikes, to considerations of social advantage.

Thus the good, conceived as that which satisfies desire, no account being taken of the worth of the desire, is gradually made to transform itself in the *Ethics*, into the 'true good,' or 'the highest good,' which makes man free by giving him the highest desires of which his nature is capable. This transformation is, in its essential features at least, a conscious development of thought on Spinoza's part, the end of which is present to him from the first. What he does, or at least aims at, is to show that if we begin with the conception that the end of all action is the satisfaction of an *appetitus*, we are driven on to recognise that our *appetitus* depends on that which we judge to be good for us as tending to maintain our existence, and finally, that the judgment of what will *really* secure this end, is one with the attainment of the end itself.

In this way, it is possible for Spinoza to maintain, as he does, both that all good is relative to and conditioned by the individual and his desires, and yet, that for each individual there is an absolute or supreme good, which he ought to seek, or a law which as a moral being he is obliged to have regard to. This latter is no less relative to human nature,

and even to the individual man, than the former ; but it is relative to the man, and his advantage, as a whole, and not to one or more particular desires. It can be deduced from human nature, and is not a yoke imposed upon it from without. It is indeed but the *conatus sese conservandi*, which constitutes the essence of each man, come to an adequate consciousness of its own nature. Thus it is the ultimate relativity, or the supreme *utile*, through which conduct can be judged. An absolute law which is not thus relative to, and imposed by, a man's nature upon itself, Spinoza refuses even to admit as possible. J

But, to appreciate the process of thought by which he rises from the conception of a good relative to a particular desire, to that of a good relative to human nature as a whole, we must consider the three main stages of his argument. These are (1) the nature of the Passions, and the defects which attach to them, and render them an inadequate expression of man's nature ; (2) the nature of Reason, and the qualities in virtue of which it is able to give to man's powers a more adequate realisation ; (3) what is involved in, or what can be necessarily deduced from, human nature, when thus understood by Reason, or 'as adequately expressed.' The first two of these questions will be considered in this chapter and the next, the third will occupy us thereafter. L

First then, what is the nature of Passion, and in what respects does it fail to explain, or fail to furnish us with a true idea of, man's nature? Spinoza's answer is, in the first place, that all passions are, as the name indicates, passivities rather than actions or activities. They are so, indeed, only *in respect of the man so affected.* For, as there is no effect without a cause, and a cause must be a power or activity, the cause of a passion is no less a power or activity than the cause of any activity in man. But in the case of a passion the cause, or activity, is not in the man, but in things outside of him. He is affected, it is they that affect. He does not determine himself, but is determined from without. The 'power' in this instance is not derived from the nature of the man, but from the rest of the natural system to which he belongs, and of which he is necessarily a part. The '*vis et*

incrementum of those desires which are passions, must be defined in terms, not of the power of man, but in terms of the power of the things which are outside of him (Part 4, Append., § 2), or "in terms of the power of the external cause compared with our own power" (Part 4, Prop. 5). Human passions may—we have already seen that they do—display the might and varied energies of Nature no less than do those things in which we take pleasure, and find profit. But they do not express the might or the powers of man; they do not reveal the energies of his nature, or the *virtus* which is distinctive of him. They show how he can be acted upon by other things, but not how he acts or reacts upon them. Thus they are the signs of man's impotence, and, in respect of his nature, negative rather than positive. "Passions are not referred to the Mind, except in so far as it has something which involves negation; or, in so far as it is a part of Nature, which cannot be clearly and distinctly apprehended by itself in separation from the other parts" (Part 3, Prop. 3, Schol.). Spinoza expresses the same idea, in other words, when he says that "the essence of a passion cannot be explained through our essence alone" (Part 4, Prop. 5, Dem.); and that "we are said to be passive, or to suffer, when anything takes place in us of which we are only in part the Cause, that is to say, anything which cannot be deduced from the laws of our nature alone" (Part 4, Prop. 2, Dem.).

If then, the Passions are only *partially* explicable through our own nature, they are, from the point of view of the Mind, 'inadequate ideas.' That is to say, in so far as we are subject to them, we are under the sway of forces of which our knowledge is limited and our understanding imperfect, and we are moved to ends which are not necessarily those which contribute to our welfare. We are in fact the creatures of our circumstances, not their masters. And instead of being perfectly free and self-determined, as popular opinion holds to be the case, when we give free play to our lusts and inclinations, we are miserably enslaved, the more miserably that we, 'unconscious of the causes of our actions,' think ourselves free.

Spinoza seeks by an analysis of the passions, in general, and in detail, to show (1) that all passion is slavery, (2) that it is the slavery of a spiritual or thinking being, and (3) that as such it is not final or self-consistent, but has within it the promise of its own transformation.

These points we shall illustrate by indicating some of the aspects in which his argument is presented. He shows that the passions involve man's slavery, or subjection to outward causes, by appealing to the fact that individuals seldom seek their real welfare, but are carried hither and thither like the waves of the sea, inconstant in purpose, and partial in judgment. If they were born free they would know and will their own welfare. The *conatus sese conservandi* would in that case express itself only in the pursuit of their true advantage. But they are not so born. They are born subject to the influences of the whole natural system to which they belong, and for long they know little of the forces which play upon them, and just as little of what constitutes their own happiness. They are passive rather than active; they are acted upon more than they react, and they "obey fortune rather than themselves." Thus if, as is so often repeated, the perfection of a thing is in proportion to what it can do, and in inverse proportion to what it has to suffer, the perfection of an individual at such a stage of existence is of the slightest.

Yet the passivities of a thing, while we call them, relatively to that thing, impotences, are not simply negations. They are at the least negations that are necessarily relative to a positive. And while they do not constitute the perfection, or reality, of the thing, they indicate where that perfection is to be sought. Both a stone and a man may be passive, but the passivity in each case is quite different, as different as is the nature and activity of each. The same object or event will affect the earth in one way, a tree in quite another, and a man in still another. Thus the ways in which men can be affected, or what we call their passions, are *sui generis*. They are to be understood, in the first instance, as the 'other' of certain activities characteristic of human nature, and we shall discover in the end that they are more than this.

What are those energies of which the passions are the

negative side? For Spinoza they are summed up in the power of thinking, of which intelligence, desire, will, etc., are particular forms or modes. To think adequately, or truly, of God, oneself, and things, is the highest activity of which man is capable. Thus the passivities of human nature, or its passions, are forms of confused thought, imperfect apprehensions of oneself, one's good, and one's place in the system of things. They arise from the imaginative view of man's life, and the world in which he lives, and are themselves limited or partial judgments.

This partial, or negative, judgment, which is at the root of all passion, may be illustrated from different sides. On one side, it is the undue emphasis of the personal and subjective aspect of all good. Each man judges a thing to be good, or bad, according to his own ruling passion (Part 3, Prop. 39, Schol.); and this it is but natural for him to do. But the 'naturalness' of it does not alter the consequences which necessarily follow. For men who are at the mercy of their passions will differ from one another as much in their judgments of good and evil as they admittedly do differ in their emotions (Part 3, Prop. 51, Schol.), their brains being no less various than their tastes (Part 1, Append.). Nor does a judgment regarding their own good and bad content them. Each individual necessarily seeks to make all others live in accordance with *his* judgment and disposition; since the more individuals there are who like what he likes, and dislike what is distasteful to him, the more is his idea of good furthered. But then *each* is seeking thus to make his idea of good and bad into a universal law, and to impose his will upon all the rest. The result can only be strife, confusion, and hatred. For "he who tries, from emotion alone, to make others love what he loves, and live after his mind, acts solely from impulse (*impetus*). Thus, he is an object of hatred, especially to those whose inclinations are different, as the latter are no less eager that others should live according to their wish, and, moved by the same impulse, they try to make them do so" (Part 4, Prop. 37, Schol. I.). Thus the necessary subjectivity of human good, and the fact that it is relative to, and even constituted by,

the thought of the individual whose good it is, seems to land us in inextricable difficulties. If what is good for one may be bad for another, and yet each can desire and seek only what he judges to be good for himself, how can there be any objective good, or any law of conduct universally binding upon men? And in the absence of such a law, how can their relations to one another be other than those of fear, discord, and enmity?

Spinoza meets this difficulty by asking how it arises. Is it due to the subjective character of the good, to the individual judgment which that good involves, and the personal interests which it embodies? And would the difficulty disappear if the 'personal equation' were made less prominent, or eliminated altogether; if each man were to learn to will the good of others rather than his own, or theirs as well as his own? Is the cause of social discord due to the fact that each judges, and desires, what is good for himself; and takes no account of whether it is good for others or not, but makes their interests subservient to his own? Spinoza's reply is, that this contrast between 'my own good' and 'the good of others' is not only irrelevant, but puts the enquiry on a false trail. I simply *cannot* desire the good of others unless I judge this to be *my* good. Even St. Paul's willingness to be "accursed from Christ," was, at the same time, the desire to have his own highest blessedness realised in, and through, "his brethren according to the flesh." A good which would have been theirs, and not his, could neither be the object of thought nor of desire.

Thus, from Spinoza's point of view, the controversy between those who regard the good of the self as the *summum bonum*, and those who hold that this is subordinate to the good of others, presents itself as a barren and meaningless dispute. Nay, it diverts the mind from the real problem, and sets it to deal with an issue on which the victory of either side would be fatal to morality. For the point of real interest is, wherein does a man's good consist, and how can he attain it? This end is no more selfish than it is unselfish; and the kinds of conduct, which are popularly described by the terms selfish and unselfish,

differ in reality, not in the number of persons who share in them, but in the quality of the actions themselves. If the individual always knew what was for his welfare, it might be fairly argued that it was his duty to do to others as he would wish them to do to him ; but this is just the difficulty. He does not know, save in a very imperfect way, what would constitute even his own true welfare. "*Ex affectu* we do nothing which we know assuredly to be good" (Part 4, Prop. 50, Schol.). Merely to universalise this end, by applying it to others, does not change the intrinsic quality and value of the action itself. An imperfect idea, even though it be an idea of the good, is not made any more true simply by the fact that many others share in it along with me.

This is a point upon which Spinoza lays much emphasis. His contention is that social discord is not due to the fact that each man is seeking only what he thinks best for himself, and is neglectful of the claims of others ; but rather to the fact that the individual's judgment, as to what *is* good for himself, is more or less mistaken. It is because what he judges to constitute his happiness, and what for that reason he necessarily desires, is not really of such a nature as to satisfy him, that his pursuit of it brings him directly into conflict with others, whose ideas of their own happiness are no less partial. Thus the individual finds himself at variance with others only because he is at variance with himself. "Every one orders all things according to his own ruling passion (*affectus*), and those who are vexed by conflicting emotions do not know what they wish" (Part 3, Prop. 2, Schol.). "In so far as men are vexed by emotions which are passions, they can differ in nature from one another ; and *thus far also one and the same man is varius et inconstans*" (Part 4, Prop. 33).

The defects incident to that view of the nature of the good which any individual forms from emotion or passion, Spinoza points out in different places. First of all, it is not his good or advantage, because it is only the good of, or relative to, a *part* of his nature, *i.e.* it ministers to some particular passion or desire. It thus leaves out of account, or is bad relative to

the other parts of the individual's nature ; and it may, therefore, be bad for his nature as a whole. "A desire which springs from gladness, or from sadness, and is referred to one or to some, and not to all parts of the body, does not have regard to the welfare of the man as a whole" (Part 4, Prop. 60). "As, therefore, gladness is generally referred to one part of the body, we generally desire to preserve our being without taking any account of our health as a whole" (*Ibid.*, Schol.).

A further defect follows from this one. The desires which spring from such emotions may betray us into excess. Because they are partial and one-sided, and tend to destroy the balance, or proportion, through which our being is maintained, they are dangerous. A desire which sprang from our nature as a whole could not indeed be excessive ; but one which nourishes one part of it at the expense, or to the neglect, of the other parts, needs to be guarded against.

"As, then, those things are good which are of service to the parts of the Body in the discharge of their functions ; and as Gladness consists in the fact that a man's power, in so far as he consists of Mind and Body, is assisted or increased ; therefore all those things which produce Gladness are good. Yet, since things do not act with a view to affecting us with Gladness, and their power of acting is not controlled from regard to our welfare ; and since, moreover, Gladness is generally referred mainly to one part of the Body, therefore the emotions of Gladness commonly (unless Reason and vigilance are exercised) go to excess ; and, therefore, so also do the desires which spring from these emotions" (Part 4, Append., § 30). And in the Schol. of Prop. 44, Part 4, we have the counterpart of this statement regarding the Mind. "*Hilaritas* [*i.e.* the equal affection of all parts of the Body], which I have called good, is more easily conceived than observed. For the emotions by which we are daily moved are generally referred to some part of the Body, which is affected above the others ; and accordingly emotions as a rule go to excess, and so absorb the Mind in the thought of one object alone that it cannot think of others." Nay, this fixed idea, severed from all others, may so dominate the Mind, and blind it to the perception of its true good, that the passion, in its excess, becomes a kind of madness. For "although men are subject to very many emotions, and there are few men discoverable who are always stirred by one and the same emotion ; yet there are not wanting those to whom one and the same emotion obstinately clings. For we see men sometimes so affected by one object, that although it is not present, they believe it to be before them. If this happen to a man while awake

we say that he is out of his mind or insane. And no less are those believed to be mad—for do they not arouse ridicule?—who dream night and day of nothing but a lover or a mistress. But although the miser thinks of nothing but gain, or money, and the ambitious man of nothing but fame, etc., *they* are not believed to be out of their minds; the reason for this being that such men are commonly a source of trouble to others, and are considered to deserve hatred. In reality, however, Avarice, Ambition, Lust, etc., are forms of insanity, although they are not numbered among the diseases" (Part 4, Prop. 44, Schol.). Even Love itself may go to excess, and betray the best interests of life, if it be joined to a partial apprehension of the nature of our good (Part 4, Prop. 44).

A third defect of that idea of good which is based upon passion, or another proof of its partial character, is its blindness to the future and limitation to the present. Passion does not give a true judgment, since it is based upon defective knowledge, and is biassed in favour of what it knows, or rather what it images to itself (*imaginatur*). "The desires by which we are chiefly moved have regard to the present only and not to the future" (Part 4, Prop. 60, Schol.). "That which we, when led by our emotions, put in the first place, is what is pleasant for the time being, and we cannot weigh future things with an equal emotion of soul" (Part 4, Append., § 30). To this cause is to be traced the fact that the knowledge of good and evil which we have, so often fails to maintain us in the steadfast pursuit of our welfare, against the seductions of a present pleasure. We know, or rather image, the good of the present vividly, it clothes itself in circumstance; but the good of the future remains for the most part inadequately or abstractly conceived by us.

"If we could have an adequate knowledge of the duration of things, and could determine by Reason the times of their existence, we would view things in the future with the same emotion as things in the present; and the good which the Mind conceived as future, it would desire exactly as if it were present. In this case, the Mind would sacrifice a lesser present good rather than a greater future one; and that which was good for the present, but the cause of some future evil, it would not at all desire. But we can have only a very inadequate knowledge of the duration of things, and the times of the existence of things we determine by imagination alone, which is not affected equally by the image of a past and of a future thing. Thus it comes that the true knowledge which we

have of good and bad, is only abstract or universal ; and the judgment which we make, regarding the order of things, and the connexion of causes, in order that we may be able to determine what is good or bad for us at the present, is more imaginary than real. Thus, it is not surprising if a desire which springs from the knowledge of good and bad, in so far as this is concerned with the future, can be very readily overcome by a desire for things which afford pleasure in the present" (Part 4, Prop. 62, Schol.).

This bias in favour of present enjoyment, Spinoza holds to be inseparable from emotion, because of the abstract knowledge, that is the 'opinion,' or 'imagination,' on which it rests. How it is to be corrected we shall see when we deal with Reason and its function.

In these respects, then, the judgment of the individual regarding his good, and the desire which is synonymous with this judgment, are apt to be partial and one-sided. Spinoza frequently calls them blind (see Part 4, Prop. 58, Schol.), since they are relative only to certain aspects or elements in human life, and are without any governing principle, or sense of the proportionate value of objects of desire. To this it is due that men are "*inconstantes et varii*." They seek a good which is often more imaginary than real, and the passions by which they are moved are of such a nature as to lead to no true satisfaction, no real *acquiescentia in se ipso*. Vain-glory, for example (see Part 4, Prop. 58, Schol.), is an *acquiescentia in se ipso* which turns out to be really none ; since it depends wholly on popular favour, the most inconstant of all things, and makes men rejoice in the harm that befalls others. And even pity (see Part 4, Prop. 50, Schol.), though it has an appearance of virtue, does not yield real satisfaction of spirit ; since it often leads us, deceived as we are apt to be by false tears, and by our ignorance of what is for others' good, to do what we afterwards have reason to regret.

Thus the real cause of the defects which have been pointed out as attaching to the passions, is the want of a self-consistent idea of human good in them. Such emotions have not in view the '*utilitas*' of the man as a whole ; and they, therefore, do not adequately express the *conatus sese conservandi*. If they are good, they are good by accident ;

for what is really good cannot be desired until it is known, and it is not known until the object of a particular desire is correlated with others as contributing to the man's true welfare or *summum bonum*. There is indeed a *summum bonum* even in the desire which springs from an emotion. But "the *summum bonum* which men desire *ex affectu*, is often of such a nature that only one man can be possessed of it. Hence, those who love such a good are not consistent with themselves; and while they rejoice to sing the praises of the thing which they love, they are afraid of being believed" (Part 4, Prop. 37, Schol. 1.). In such a good, self-consistency, or repose of spirit, is not to be found; for there is no true possession, or security of enjoyment, in such a case. A man's supreme good would, under these conditions, depend not on himself, but on fortune. Indeed, it is in devotion to objects which cannot satisfy the self as a whole, that Spinoza finds the cause of human unhappiness. "The soul's ailments, and misfortunes, have their origin mainly in too great love toward an object which is liable to many changes, and which we can never have in our possession. For no one is solicitous, or anxious, about anything except that which he loves; nor do injuries, suspicions, enmities, etc., arise except from love toward things which no one can really have in his possession" (Part 5, Prop. 20, Schol.).

The passions then do not set before us a supreme good which is consistent with itself, and adequate to human nature. This is their defect, or the proof of their impotence, as an expression of human nature, and of what it can do. On the other hand their necessary subjectivity, their relativity to this and that man, the judgments as to the good of a particular individual which underlie them, are not, *as such*, defects but excellences. The desideratum is not less of the subjective, relative, personal element, but more of it; not the elision of the individual's judgment regarding his own advantage, but its enlargement. The importance of the passions is that they are ideas, judgments in some form, desires or *conatus* of self-preservation both in the body and the mind of the individual; while their defect is that they are '*inadequate* ideas,' judg-

ments of which the individual is not the whole, but only the 'partial cause,' desires which blindly aim at a good that may not be really good.

It is clear from this why Spinoza asserts, (1) that a freedom to obey passion is not freedom, but slavery; and (2) that, on the basis of human passions, there can be no real union of men with one another.

The first follows necessarily from the fact that the passions display the power which things outside of the individual exercise over him; and this power is neither brought into existence, nor regulated, with a view to his welfare, or to the development of his powers. Thus in so far as a human life is ruled by passions, it is subject to a foreign yoke, the instrument of forces which it does not know, and cannot will, ignorant of its true interest, and impotent in the distinctively human activities in the exercise of which alone man's *virtus* and freedom consist. "The ignorant man, to say nothing of the fact that he is stirred in many ways by outward causes, and never attains to true rest of spirit (*acquiescentia animi*) lives also as it were ignorant of himself, of God, and of things, and as soon as he ceases to suffer he also ceases to be" (Part 5, Prop. 42. Schol.). "The man who is subject to emotion is not his own master (*sui juris*), but at the mercy of fortune. So much is he in its power that he is often forced to follow the worse although he sees the better" (Part 4, Pref.). Spinoza holds so strongly that this is an impotence, or slavery, of human nature that he hesitates even to call it a *peccatum*, in man to follow the worse, as that term suggests a positive capacity for acting contrary to one's nature, which is (he holds) a contradiction in terms (see *Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 2, § 20).

The second point is also a corollary from what has been said. Men cannot be drawn together, or held together, by their passions. Society will not stand on the basis of each individual's impotence, and incapacity. Inadequate ideas, and partial interests, will not of themselves coalesce.

"Men cannot, in so far as they are subject to passions, be said to agree in their nature" (Part 4, Prop. 32), the reason being that passion is impotence or negation, and agreement in negation is no agreement a

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all. "For he who says that black and white agree only in the fact that neither is red, simply asserts that black and white do not agree at all. So also, if any one says that a stone and a man agree in this only, that each of them is finite, impotent, or that neither exists from the necessity of its own nature, or lastly that each is indefinitely exceeded by the power of outward causes, his assertion simply comes to this, that a stone and a man agree in no respect. For things which agree in negation alone, or in that which they do not have, in reality do not agree at all (*Ibid.*, Schol.). Thus "in so far as men are moved by emotions which are passions, they can be at variance with one another" (Part 4, Prop. 34).

The anti-social nature of passion is pointed out more explicitly in a passage in the *Politics* (Ch. I., § 5), in which the various conclusions on this subject in the *Ethics* are brought together. Spinoza there says, "We have shown in our *Ethics* that men are more prone to revenge than to compassion; and that each man desires that the rest should live according to his bent, approving what he approves, and rejecting what he rejects. Hence, all men being equally desirous of the first place, they come into conflict, and strain every nerve to trample upon one another; and the victor in the struggle glories more in having harmed another than in having benefited himself." Thus a man cannot, in so far as he is moved by passions, attach others to himself in any permanent way. The apparent reason for this is, that he does not in his conduct have regard to their welfare, but only to his own. But the real reason is that, blinded as he is by passion, he does not have regard to his own welfare, or is deceived in his judgment of what is good for him. Hence, it is because he does not value in himself those activities of soul in which human happiness, or advantage, is to be found, that he is devoid of the positive qualities through which alone a union of souls can come into existence and be maintained. He is thus driven into antagonism with others, because he is at war with himself, and ignorant of what he wants. If he knew this, the inner and the outer strife would alike find their *quietus*.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PLACE AND FUNCTION OF REASON.

IT remains now to develop the other side of this argument. For it has another side. The impotences of a thing are not an explanation of it. What it cannot do does not show 'the definite and determinate mode of existence' which it does have ; nor enable us to understand the '*vis et potentia*' by which it endeavours to persevere in its existence. To understand this, it is necessary to find out what the thing *can* do, or the precise nature of that *virtus seu potentia* which enables it to exist, and to assert a place for itself in the universe. To say that it does this through God, or the principle of all existence, is true ; but this is only a formal statement, which applies equally to everything else. What we want to know is, what precise energies, or powers, the particular object we are interested in enjoys in virtue of this universal relation.

Now in the case of man, with whom we are dealing, these powers are not, as we have already seen, revealed or exercised in the passions. For if he had no other *vis* or *virtus* than they express he would not have any definite place in the universe, nor any *conatus sese conservandi* ; there would be no self to conserve. His power must, therefore, consist in certain activities, or energies, in and through which he can assert himself, and make his will-to-live effective. This power expresses itself both in bodily aptitude and in mental capacity ; but the latter is a more adequate embodiment of it, for "human power is to be calculated not so much by the strength of the body as by the vigour (*fortitudo*) of the Mind" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 2, § 11).

Thus the *conatus* which constitutes the essence of a man is mainly a *conatus mentis*, an effort to think or to know adequately, and the power so to do is called Reason. In fact, to apprehend a thing by Reason simply means to apprehend it adequately or truly, to have a true idea of it. And Spinoza contrasts this adequate knowledge with other modes of apprehension through hearsay, or vague experience.

What concerns us here is that Reason, or man in so far as he is an intelligent being, is able to form a true judgment of what is for his advantage as a whole, and therefore of what is really his good or *summum bonum*. He can set before himself the conception of a virtue which is its own end and its own reward.

Thus he is able to rise to a point of view from which he can set equal value on the future as on the present, for "in so far as the Mind conceives things according to the dictate of Reason, it is equally affected, whether the idea be of a future, a past, or a present object" (Part 4, Prop. 62). And thus "we shall, in so far as we allow Reason to guide us, desire a greater good which is in the future in preference to a lesser good in the present, and a lesser present evil in preference to a greater one in the future. And a lesser evil in the present which is the cause of a greater good in the future we will, by the leading of Reason, desire; while we will deny ourselves a lesser present good which is the cause of a greater evil in the future" (*Ibid.*, Prop. 66). The power of thus getting above the bias toward things which are 'sweet in the present' depends, however, not only on the conception of our good as a whole, but also on the conception of things as necessary. The idea of things as past, present, and future is only an abstract knowledge of them. To know them truly, is to understand them under the form of necessity or eternity. For "things are conceived by us as actual in two ways; either in so far as we conceive them to exist in relation to a definite time and place; or in so far as we conceive them to be contained in God, and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature. And those things which are conceived as true, or real, in this second way, are conceived by us *sub aeternitatis specie*, and

the ideas of them involve God's eternal and infinite essence" (Part 5, Prop. 29, Schol.). Thus to conceive them under the form of eternity, or necessity, is the only true knowledge of them; and the Mind cannot, in so far as it understands, find rest in any but true things. While then we can never 'picture,' or hope to picture, the past and the future with the same vividness of emotion as we do the present, we may rise to an apprehension of things, and of our own good, and even of the sacrifices which the attainment of that good will involve, which reveals to us their inner nature as independent of time.

It follows, further, that any desire which springs from Reason cannot go to excess (Part 4, Prop. 61); for human nature cannot exceed itself, or do more than it can do. That is to say, no one can ever desire his own good too much, if it is his good, and not merely some partial and temporary advantage. No desire is bad, or unlawful, save as it produces an impotence, or incapacity, in the individual himself. No one can desire to know too much, for in this his good mainly consists; and the more he knows himself the more virtuous he is. For "the first principle of Virtue is to maintain one's own being, and to do so according to the guidance of Reason. He therefore who is ignorant of himself is ignorant of the principle of all the virtues, and is consequently ignorant of all the virtues" (Part 4, Prop. 56, Dem.). For this reason the proud man and the abject man are alike impotent in spirit, and equally far removed from showing the power and excellence of which human nature is capable. They do not know themselves, but are self-deceived.

Thus the *virtus* of man consists in the power of knowing himself, and knowing things, as they are in and through God. "The supreme end of the man who is led by Reason, that is to say, the *summa cupiditas* by which he seeks to control all other desires, is that which drives him on to gain an adequate knowledge of himself, and of all the objects which can come within the grasp of his intelligence" (Part 4, Append., § 4). This is the *conatus sese conservandi*, or self-assertive impulse, in its highest form, and the only form in which it finds an

embodiment adequate to it, or gives rise to true *acquiescentia animi*.

To say that the exercise of this *virtus* constitutes man's freedom, and that only in so far as he is virtuous is he free, is but drawing the inevitable conclusion from what has been said. For freedom means not only the liberty to be, and to realise oneself, but the *power* to do so. "Freedom is a *virtus seu perfectio*. Whatever therefore goes to prove a man's impotence cannot be referred to his freedom. Hence a man can certainly not be called free, because he is able not to exist, or because he is able not to make use of Reason; but only in so far as he has power to exist, and to act according to the laws of human nature. The more free then we consider a man to be, the less can we say of him, that he is able not to make use of Reason, and to choose evil rather than good" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 2, § 7). Freedom in fact is self-determination, or determination from the necessity of one's own nature alone, as distinguished from determination from without, which reveals the power of things, but our own subordination and weakness. And self-determination exists only when the self is known, and its true interest, or welfare, is made supreme. Thus "the man who makes Reason his guide differs from him who is led solely by *affectus seu opinio* in this, that the latter does, *nolens volens*, those things of which he is in the highest degree ignorant; while the former obeys no one but himself, and does those things only which he knows to be of chief importance in life; indeed, it is for this reason that he chiefly desires them. Hence I call the former a slave, and the latter a freeman" (Part 4, Prop. 66, Schol.).

This idea is developed from another side in the *Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 2, §§ 9-11, in an argument which casts some further light upon it. Spinoza there points out that a man is in subjection to another (*alterius juris*), so long as he is in that other's power; while he is his own master (*sui juris*), in so far as he is able to withstand all force, and to avenge according to his own judgment the wrong inflicted upon him; or, to put it shortly, in so far as he is able to live according to his own bent. Now in what does the power of another over a man consist, and when can he be said to be living according to

his own bent? The answer to the first question is, that one man may make another subject to him, (1) by binding him, (2) by depriving him of his weapons and the means of defending himself or escaping, (3) by making him afraid, (4) by so attaching him to himself by kindness that he would rather obey the other than himself, and prefers to live according to the judgment of his benefactor than to follow his own. In the first two cases, the mastery extends only over the man's body; it does not bind his spirit. While in the last two it is a bond over his soul as well as his body, though the bondage lasts only so long as the fear, or the hope, which produced it. But there is a fifth form which one man's subjection to another may assume; his Mind or judgment may be deceived by him, and the man may think he is obeying only himself when in reality he is a slave. The man is not free, though his body is unbound. He is free, only if his Mind is self-determined. And his Mind is self-determined, only if it is enlightened; that is, "in so far as it is able to make a right use of Reason. . . . These men are most their own masters (*sui juris*) who most excel in Reason, and are most under its guidance. Thus I call a man free, in so far as he is led by Reason; since it is just to this extent that he is determined to action by causes which can be adequately understood through his nature alone. I call him free, although he is *necessarily* determined by these causes to action. For freedom (*libertas*) is not incompatible with necessity but implies it."

Thus the life of freedom is that which is controlled by Reason, because Reason alone can show what is a man's complete and abiding welfare. The dictates of Reason are the commands which a man's nature as self-conscious, or conscious of its true good, lays upon itself. In strict propriety then, they are not *commands* at all; as a command implies a subjection to something alien to ourselves. The latter, indeed, is the popular view of morality and religion, viz. that they are a yoke to which one must submit if he would escape terrible punishments after death. And were there no such punishment awaiting the transgressor, the yoke of morality would at once be cast off; "men would return

to their humours, and wish to direct all things according to their inclinations, and to obey fortune rather than themselves." But this view, adds Spinoza, appears to me no less absurd than that of a man who, being of opinion that he cannot forever nourish his body on wholesome food, should therefore wish to saturate it with poison (Part 5, Prop. 41, Schol.). For this reason Spinoza is loath to admit that morality, or the virtuous life, is *obedience* (*obsequium*) in any sense. It is self-realisation in its highest form. It is freedom, happiness, self-satisfaction, power, the enjoyment of one's chief good; but it is not *obedience*, or subjection to anything alien to us, or a bondage or command to which we must submit.

"We are indeed in the habit of naming the steadfast will that controls the natural inclinations in accordance with the dictate of Reason, *obedience* (*obsequium*). This I should quite approve of, if human freedom (*libertas*) consisted in the indulgence of inclination, and the rule of Reason constituted human slavery. But because man's freedom is the greater the more he can be guided by Reason and can control his inclinations, it is a grave impropriety of language to call the rational life obedience" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 2, § 20). If the virtuous life is obedience at all, it is obedience to oneself, that is, to the dictates of one's own Reason, or (what is the same thing in other words) to God in so far as he expresses, or reveals, himself in and through our Mind. To obey the laws which our own nature imposes upon us, or "to act from the necessity of our own nature alone," is the only freedom we need desire, the only freedom of which we are capable, the only freedom which is really thinkable. But obedience to our own Reason is not obedience, or subjection; it is power, *virtus*, happiness, enlargement of spirit. The power to think as we please, to desire as we please, and to be pleased indiscriminately with anything, is not power, but the want of that power which is characteristic of man. "For, in so far as we understand, we can desire nothing save that which is necessary, and we can find rest in none but true things" (Part 4, Append., § 32). For the same reason, we cannot, in so far as we make Reason our

guide, seek what is good through fear of what is bad ; but, on the contrary, we avoid the bad, because we find the good a true realisation of our nature (see Part 4, Prop. 63, and Coroll.). The good, as determined by Reason, is the supreme, and self-complete end in which the impulse of self-preservation can embody itself for man ; and hence the knowledge of this is the highest happiness, or freedom, he can enjoy.

To this argument exception may be taken, on the ground that, while Reason may show wherein a man's true good consists, it cannot make him desire that good. It may be said, that Reason is contemplative, but not active. Spinoza's answer to this is quite unambiguous, viz. that there is no such thing as a purely contemplative Reason. A man does all that he really knows. Ideas are always active. What a man desires is a perfect reflection of what he thinks. It is, in fact, the essence of his nature, and reveals precisely the measure of enlightenment he has attained regarding his own welfare and that of others. The meaning and importance of this principle we shall see later in other connections. What is of immediate interest is, that Reason is never the 'other' of our emotions and desires, but manifests itself in and through them. It condemns them as inadequate, but as 'inadequate ideas' or judgments. That is to say, it makes them condemn themselves. How it does so, and thus makes it possible for man to emancipate himself from them, we must now consider.

The individual, we have already seen, is invested with no absolute or unlimited power. He is but part of a Universe of Reality, or he expresses God in a definite and determinate way only. Thus he cannot stand exempt from all influences save those of which he is himself the adequate cause. He cannot lift himself out of that system of mutually dependent parts, where " each particular object, or whatever is finite and has a determinate existence, cannot exist or be determined to act, unless it be determined to exist and act by another cause which is also finite and has a determinate existence ; and this cause, again, cannot exist, or be determined to action, save by another which is also finite, and has a deter-

minate existence, and so on *in infinitum*" (Part I., Prop. 28). To escape from this net-work of influence is impossible, so long as man is but part of the world he knows. And were it possible, it would be foolish; for the human body requires many and varied means of sustenance, which must be found in things beyond itself; and the human mind "is the more perfect according as it must know things other than itself."

Of this intimate connexion between the individual, and other objects and beings, the emotions to which human nature is subject, are at once the effect and the proof. Each man is too weak and limited, too insufficient to himself, to be indifferent to all other objects and unaffected by all other persons. He cannot but desire and love something, yea many things. "Desire is indeed the essence of his nature." Yet these very objects of desire give rise to the passions which vex his life. For "if an object is not loved, the loss of it will not grieve me, nor the possession of it by another rouse my envy or jealousy." But, on the other hand, everything to which a man attaches himself opens a fresh channel through which hope and fear, hatred and sadness, may play upon him and disturb his peace of mind.

Thus we seem to be face to face with a dilemma. The insufficiency of our own nature makes interest in, and reliance upon, other things and beings an imperious necessity. The Stoic attitude of independence and passionless calm is not natural to man; and even the Stoics themselves (see *Ethics*, Part 5, Preface) had to admit that it could be attained at all only after much practice and trouble. "We are too weak to live without love." Yet, on the other hand, the more we seek to grasp, the more do we expose ourselves to the chances and mischances of life and put our happiness in pawn, leaving our peace of mind at the mercy of what we can neither command nor control. Thus the object of our desire may become the cause of our dispeace, and even the means of our destruction.

Is there any way of escape from this *impasse*? Spinoza holds that there is, and that it consists in recognising wherein the strength and the weakness of our nature lie. Our nature is always subject to emotions (*affectus*); but not all emotions

are bad for, or harmful to, it. There are emotions (*affectus*) which are passions (*passiones*), and there are emotions (*affectus*) which are actions or activities (*actiones*). And while every emotion expresses a relation in which the individual stands to objects or persons, the relation in the former case is one which displays the power of things over the individual, and his own impotence; while in the latter, it reveals his own power, and command, over what is outside of him. Emotions which are passions enslave man by making him subject to laws, or a means to ends, which are not immanent in his own nature; while emotions which are actions, further his own distinctive excellence. "The desires which follow from our nature in such a way that they can be understood through that nature alone, are those which are referred to the Mind in so far as it is conceived to consist of adequate ideas; but the other desires are not referred to the Mind, save in so far as it conceives things inadequately, and the strength and increase of these desires must be defined not by man's power, but by the power of things which are outside of us. Thus the former are correctly called actions, the latter passions; for the former always indicate our power, the latter, on the contrary, our impotence and imperfect knowledge" (Part 4, Appen., § 2).

Thus "besides the gladness and the desire which are passions, there are other emotions of gladness and of desire, which are referred to us in so far as we are active" (Part 3, Prop. 58). These emotional activities in so far as they are referred to the Mind may all, Spinoza holds, be regarded as forms of *Fortitudo*; they reveal the strength of the soul, or its power of apprehending the real nature of things and of uniting itself with it. *Fortitudo* is, indeed, to him, synonymous with *virtus*, and the good man is the *vir fortis*. But such Fortitude has at once a self-regarding and an other-regarding side. The former he calls *Animositas*, the latter *Generositas*. *Animositas* "is the desire by which each man endeavours to preserve his own being after the guidance of Reason alone"; while *Generositas* "is the desire by which each man, after the guidance of Reason alone, endeavours to be of service to the rest of men and to unite them to himself

by friendship" (Part 3, Prop. 59, Schol.). As forms of *Animositas* we may take Self-Control (*Temperantia*), Sobriety, and Presence of Mind in danger; and as forms of *Generositas*, *Modestia* and *Clementia*.

All forms of *Fortitudo* are necessarily good, seeing that they express the power of the mind, or display its distinctive excellence. There can be nothing higher, or better, at which man could aim. All things else are of value only as they contribute to develop this inherent capacity, this power over oneself and over others for the best ends. It is the consciousness of this power which gives rise to that peace of spirit (*acquiescentia animi*) or Self-love (*Philautia*), in which virtue proves itself its own reward. *Fortitudo* is, in fact, perfection itself. It can neither be the means to an end beyond itself nor stand in need of any justification from without.

Were man born endowed with this perfection, he would know nothing of the chief emotions which now move him. For most of these emotions arise not from the exercise of such activities of soul, but from the effort of attaining them. Man's life is, in fact, in the main a process of transition from a less to a greater, or from a greater to a less perfection; and whatever power of spirit he enjoys has to be won under these conditions. Virtue, as we shall see, is not a natural quality but an acquirement.

What, then, of those emotions which are not activities? All emotions, Spinoza says, may be reduced to the three primary ones, Desire, Gladness (*Laetitia*), and Sadness (*Tristitia*). Desire "is the very essence of the man, in so far as he is conceived as determined to some activity from any given affection." Gladness is a transition from a less perfection to a greater; while Sadness is a transition from a greater perfection to a less. From these definitions it follows, that sadness can never be good, since it means lessened capacity, power, or *virtus*. It would seem to follow no less certainly, that gladness can never be bad; and that to 'live well,' and 'to be glad' (*laetari*), must be synonymous terms. This is true, Spinoza holds, wherever the greater perfection applies to the body or to the mind, as a whole, the only

exceptions to it being cases in which the gladness affects merely some part, or parts, of the whole man, and gives to them a heightened vitality at the expense of the other parts. In such cases gladness may even be bad.

From these three primary emotions Spinoza explains all the others, such as Wonder, Contempt, Love, Hate, Hope, Fear, Security, Despair, Remorse, Pity, Gratitude, Indignation, Envy, Humility, Penitence, Pride, Ambition, Shame, Emulation, Benevolence, Anger, Revenge, Cruelty, Luxury, Avarice, Lust, etc. All of them are passions, or passivities, of the soul, in so far as the Mind itself is not their adequate or sufficient cause; or, to put it otherwise, they are Passions in so far as the Mind has only inadequate ideas of them.

But this very fact shows that the separation between emotions which are activities and emotions which are passions is not, in Spinoza's judgment, a fixed opposition of contrary elements.

"Any action is called bad in so far as it springs from the fact that we are affected with Hate or some bad emotion. But no action, considered in itself alone, is good or bad; but one and the same action is, at one time, good, at another, bad; therefore to the same action, which now is bad, or which springs from some bad emotion, we can be led by Reason" (Part 4, Prop. 59, 2nd Dem.). Or again, "To all the actions, to which we are determined from an emotion which is a passion, we can be determined by Reason independently of it" (*Ibid.*). Thus "an emotion which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it" (Part 5, Prop. 3). And it further follows, that "there is no emotion of which we cannot form a clear and distinct notion" (Prop. 4, Coroll.). For "each man has the power of understanding himself and his emotions, if not absolutely, in part at least, clearly and distinctly; and thus of bringing it about, that he suffer less from them. This matter therefore, ought chiefly to engage our attention, that we may know each emotion, as far as possible, clearly and distinctly; that thus the Mind may be determined to think those things which it apprehends clearly and distinctly, and in which it finds complete satisfaction; and thus that the emotion may be separated from the thought of the outward cause, and be united with true thoughts. The result of this will be, that not only will the Love, Hate, etc., be destroyed, but also that the *appetitus* or *cupiditas*, which commonly spring from such an emotion, cannot be excessive. For it is to be noted, in the first place, that it is one and the same *appetitus* through which a man is said both to act and to suffer. For example, we have shown that human nature is so constituted that

every one desires that the rest should live according to his pleasure. Now, in the man who is not led by Reason, this *appetitus* is a *passion*, which we call Ambition, and which does not differ much from Pride; while on the other hand, in the man who lives by the guidance of Reason, it is an *actio* or a *virtus* which is known as Morality (*Pietas*). And in this way, all the *appetitus* or *cupiditates* are passions only in so far as they spring from inadequate ideas; while they are accounted a *virtus* when they arise from, or are begotten by, adequate ideas. For all the desires, by which we are determined to do anything, can arise from adequate as well as from inadequate ideas" (Part 5, Prop. 4, Schol.).

To show how this change from inadequate to adequate knowledge can be accomplished, is the chief task which Spinoza attempts in the 4th and 5th parts of the *Ethics*. What mainly concerns us at this point is, that such a transformation is possible, and within man's power. It is possible because man can *think* the causes by which he is moved to passion or to action. Such knowledge is of the very essence of his Mind; and in so far as he knows things truly he thereby refers them to God. Thus he suffers from the passions only in so far as he does not understand; while in so far as he does understand, he is not passive, but active, and the power of his nature finds its appropriate exercise.

"In so far as we understand the causes of Sadness, it thus far ceases to be a passion, that is, it thus far ceases to be Sadness; and thus, in so far as we understand God to be the cause of Sadness, thus far are we glad" (Part 5, Prop. 18, Schol.). "The power of the Mind is defined by its knowledge alone; and its impotence or passivity (*passio*) is reckoned solely by the privation of its knowledge, that is, by that through which its ideas are called inadequate. It follows from this, that that Mind is chiefly passive whose chief part consists of inadequate ideas, so that it is distinguished rather through that which it suffers than through that which it does" (Part 5, Prop. 20, Schol.).

Moreover, such knowledge delivers the Mind from immersion in the particular things of sense and imagination, and from devotion to them as of absolute worth. This carries with it the enlightenment of the Mind as to what constitutes man's real good. "From these things we easily apprehend what clear and distinct knowledge, and especially that third sort of knowledge whose basis is the very knowledge of God, can do to control the emotions; for if it does

not wholly destroy them, in so far as they are passions, it brings it about at least that they occupy the Mind very little. Moreover, it produces Love toward an object immutable and eternal, and one which can be truly in our possession. And such Love cannot be corrupted by any of the defects which are present in ordinary Love; on the contrary, it can be continually on the increase, can fill the chief part of the Mind, and be widely felt" (Part 5, Prop. 20, Schol.).

CHAPTER X.

THE GOOD AS AN IDEAL HUMAN NATURE.

WE have seen then, (1) that Good is always relative, (2) that it is relative to man and his purposes; it is a *modus cogitandi*, or an act of judgment. While therefore it is not applicable to things considered in themselves, but only to things as they stand in relation to, or can be brought into relation to, man; it is not an untrue but a perfectly valid and enlightening category of reality, when kept within its proper province. (3) We have seen further, that there is a moral good, which is its own end, and to which everything else that can be called good is relative and subordinate. (4) This good is determined by Reason, which alone enables us to look at our *Utilitas* as a whole. (5) This good, while it can, and should, be called absolute, or supreme, or final, is still *relative*, relative to human thought and purpose and desire. It is not the end of all creation. It is not a law of things, nor is it a law of God except in so far as he expresses himself in and through man. It is God's law *for man*, or the law which man's own nature imposes upon him, and in the recognition of which alone he can find his happiness. (6) This absolute good or welfare, which cannot with propriety be called a command, or a law, or (to use Kant's phrase) an 'imperative,' is relative not only to human nature, but to each individual. It is his highest activity, his '*summus conatus in suo esse perseverandi*,' his '*summa cupiditas*.' Indeed, the absolute good can exist only as it is thus thought and desired by the individual, for it consists in the highest activity or *virtus* of his own nature, and only as it does so, does it constitute his freedom or

power ; otherwise it would be a law or yoke imposed from without, and not a *libertas*, or a law from within the man's own nature, viz. the law imposed by his own Reason, or by the adequate thought of things and of Self. The more the individual is determined by his own Reason to do those things which are best for him, the more freedom does he enjoy.

So far then we have discovered that Reason is the distinctive activity in virtue of which the individual is able to determine what is really good, or *utile*, for him ; and we have seen at the same time that it is the source of, or rather that it *is*, the highest desire, or impulse of self-preservation, which, constituting, as it does, the essence of each man, makes him necessarily seek what he judges, and still more what he ' knows assuredly,' to be for his good. Reason thus presents itself as the principle which determines the nature of the individual's good, the principle which at once reveals to each man what, because it is his true welfare, he ought to seek, and at the same time impels him to seek it.

But Spinoza is not content with this result. However earnest he is in his insistence that each man cannot, and (if it be necessary to add) *ought* not, to sacrifice himself and his interest to any other person or end whatsoever ; that no one seeks to preserve his being for the sake of anything else ; and that the foundation of all morality and religion is the endeavour after one's welfare ; he maintains, with no less emphasis, that the individual who understands and seeks his true interest, will, by a necessity which is of the very essence of the moral life, desire and produce a good in which all may share, and one which will be all the richer in content for each, the more persons there are who claim to participate in it. In other words, his argument is, that the true apprehension of individual well-being, is the condition and the source of a social or objective good, and of an order of life based upon the recognition of such a ' true good ' ; or, in modern language, that the welfare of ' others ' will be secured only if each man does his own ' best.' The proof of this thesis will occupy us in this chapter.

We have already seen that a man's good is determined by

his own nature, and not by any thing or person external to him. His good is what satisfies the *summa cupiditas* of his nature, this *summa cupiditas* being determined by Reason. Such a good therefore is its own end ; there is nothing more excellent, or *utilius*, for us, for the sake of which we might or should desire it. And as the good means what satisfies desire, the supreme good will be what satisfies our highest desire, or the desire which most contributes to the maintenance of our being as a whole, and to which all other desires are subordinate and relative.

But while the individual's *summum bonum* is immanent, in the sense that it is determined and even constituted by his own Reason ; it is not immanent in the sense that its realisation is to be found simply in and through the individual's own nature. Subjectivity of this kind would be the death, both of mind and of body. For while "*virtus* is to be sought for its own sake and there is nothing of greater value for the sake of which *it* should be desired" (Part 4, Prop. 18, Schol.), there are many things required, besides those which the individual's own body and mind furnish, if this *virtus* is to find an expression adequate to it.

"The human body requires for its sustenance very many other bodies, by which it may be, so to speak, continuously re-born" (Part 2, Post. 4). "For the nutriment of the body, it is needful to have at our disposal many different kinds of food. For the human body is composed of very many parts, which differ in their nature from one another. These require nourishment, not only constantly, but also of a varied character, if the body as a whole is to be fitted equally for all the functions of which its nature is capable, and if consequently the Mind also is to be fitted equally for apprehending many things" (Part 4, Append., §27). "It follows, that we can never bring it about that we shall stand in need of nothing external to us for the conservation of our being, nor that we shall so live as to be independent of the things which are external to us. And if, moreover, we have regard to our Mind, our intelligence would assuredly be more imperfect, if the Mind alone existed and did not have anything but itself as the object of its intelligence" (Part 4, Prop. 18, Schol.).

Thus the dependence of man upon things external to him does not *of itself* destroy the self-determination, or *virtus*, which is peculiar to him. On the contrary, without this relation neither his body nor his Mind would be able to

exercise those distinctive activities in which the man's happiness is to be found. For while, as we have seen, "we suffer, in so far as we are a part of Nature which cannot be thought by itself apart from the other parts" (Part 4, Prop. 2); yet "it cannot be that man is not a part of Nature, and that he can suffer no changes save those which can be understood through his own nature alone, and of which he is the adequate cause" (Part 4, Prop. 4). He cannot lift himself out of the common order to which he, along with all other things, belongs. And imperfect, and inadequate to himself, as he is, it would be no *virtus*, or power, in him if he could do so. Aptitude to affect, and be affected by, things outside of him, is essential to his nature's perfection; and while to affect is more of a *virtus* than to be affected, the latter can never be absent from any part of universal nature, and it will be less absent from man's existence than from any other.

If, then, the individual cannot make himself independent of what is external to him, nor remain unaffected by everything except his own self-determination, if such independence would even be impotence and not power, how can we still say that man's freedom consists in an essential activity of his soul, and that the end of all his endeavour is the preservation of his own being? Spinoza's answer is that man, in virtue of his Reason, has the power of regarding the affections which he receives from without (*i.e.* the affections which are passions, or passivities) as so much raw material, capable of being transmuted into actions or activities of his soul. He effects this transformation when he understands that by which he is affected, or sees the necessity of it; sees, that is to say, why it is what it is. For we can understand nothing without thereby adding to the strength of our own nature, or developing our own intelligence. What presented itself at first as alien to our freedom is really the means by which we attain and develop it. Nothing is alien to us, save that which we do not, or rather cannot, understand. "We do not know assuredly that anything is good or bad, save that which really develops our understanding, or which can prevent us from understanding" (Part 4, Prop. 27). What we understand is no longer something which affects us

passively, but something which imparts to us more *virtus* or power, and enables us to enjoy greater freedom or self-determination.

Thus, it is not the necessity of a man's dependence upon what is without which prevents him exercising the functions that are distinctive of him, but his failure to apprehend this necessity. Such a failure means that he does not see wherein his real welfare is to be found, and that he is made the instrument to ends which are determined more by the nature of things external to him than by his own.¹ If he understood what is other than himself he would see in it, not the limit of his freedom, but the means of expressing and expanding it. Or, to put it otherwise, Reason shows that not only is the individual's good something intrinsic, or immanent in his nature (and called for that reason *virtus* or goodness), but also that it is the individual's good, or goodness, only as it enables him to understand and assimilate what is without in other things and beings.

It is for this reason that the good of each man is *necessarily* an objective good. It is his good only as he can best realise himself in, and through, the objects and persons without him; and this he cannot do save as he knows them adequately. "No life is a rational one which is without understanding; and things are good only as they are of service to enable a man to enjoy the mental life which is defined by his intelligence. And on the other hand, we call bad only those things which prevent a man being able to perfect his Reason and to enjoy a rational life" (Part 4, Append., § 5). Thus the individual's true interest is necessarily mediated by that objective order of existence to which he belongs; for while "it cannot be that a man is not a part of Nature and does not follow its common order" (*Ibid.*, § 7), he alone can understand the order to

¹ Cf. Part 4, Prop. 37, Schol. 1. "The difference between true *virtus* and *impotentia* is easily apprehended from what has been said. True *virtus*, that is to say, is nothing else than to live according to the guidance of Reason alone; and so impotence consists simply in this, that the man suffers himself to be led by the things which are external to him, and is by them determined to do those things which the common constitution of external things requires, and not those which his own nature, considered in itself alone, requires."

which he belongs, and make it the means of his own self-realisation.

What Spinoza has to prove then, is, that while there can be no end of higher value for a man than his own *virtus*, there are many things outside of him which are good, or *utile*, for him, and ought to be desired by him as the means, even the necessary means, to this supreme end. These things will be good for him, or means to his *summum bonum*, in proportion as they agree with his nature; that is to say, as they "assist and increase his power of acting." "Nothing can be good or bad for us unless it has something in common with us," since only such a thing increases or lessens, helps or hinders our power of acting (Part 4, Prop. 29). "In so far as anything agrees with our nature it is necessarily good. . . And hence, the more anything agrees with our nature, the more advantageous, or the better, is it for us; and conversely the more serviceable anything is to us, the more does it thus far agree with our nature" (*Ibid.*, Prop. 31). In other words, what has nothing in common with us will not affect us either with gladness or with sadness; that is, will not lift us from a lower perfection, or power of action, to a higher, nor sink us from a higher to a lower; it will be neither bad nor good for us. But that which has anything in common with us may be either bad or good for us, though it will be necessarily good in respect of that element which it has in common with us.

Whatever, then, contributes to make us more 'fit' for action, is necessarily good.

"Whatever so trains the human body, that it can be affected in more ways, or makes it capable of affecting external bodies in more ways, is *utile* for a man; and it is the more *utile*, the more it, thereby, makes the Body capable of being affected by, and of affecting, other bodies in more ways. For the better fitted the Body is for these, the more is the Mind capable of knowing" (Part 4, Prop. 38, and Dem.). "The *Utilitas* which we gain from the things which are external to us consists—in addition to the experience and knowledge which we acquire by our observation of them, and the transformation of them into other shapes—mainly in the preservation of our Body. In this respect, those things are of chief importance, which can so nourish and sustain the Body, that each of its organs shall be enabled to perform its function properly. For the more readily the

Body can be affected in more ways, and can affect external bodies in very many, the greater is the Mind's capacity for thinking" (Part 4, Append., § 27).

Of all the *utilitas*, however, which we can derive from what is external to us, no part is comparable in importance with that which comes, or may come, to us from other men. Of all the things which are good for us, as furthering our virtue or raising us to a greater perfection, none is worthy to be put on the same level with this. For, with nothing has the nature of any individual so much in common as it has with other individuals of the same species (Part 4, Append., § 9); and, therefore, nothing can be so good for him as they. "Nothing is more useful to a man than a man." This is seen in the fact, that "if two individuals of precisely the same nature unite with one another they form an individual twice as strong as either" (Part 4, Prop. 18, Schol.); and so men are able, by affording one another mutual help, to secure for each the things for which his nature craves, but to attain which his own strength would have been unequal (Part 4, Append., § 28). But it is seen, still more, in the fact, that a relationship of a quite peculiar kind can be established between a man and other men, such a relationship as cannot subsist between him and any other particular object in Nature, a communion of mind with mind, a power of uniting through friendship and social intercourse. "Except man, we know of no particular thing in Nature in whose Mind we can rejoice. With nothing else can we unite in friendship, or in any kind of social life" (Part 4, Append., § 26). And this difference must make our attitude toward human beings quite other than it is, or can be, toward any other object; seeing that the good will, in such a case, be of another character. For while in the case of anything other than man, "a regard for our welfare does not require us to preserve it, but leads us either to preserve it, or to destroy it, or to adapt it to our wants in any way according to the varied uses of which it admits" (*Ibid.*); in the case of man a true regard for our welfare allows us no such 'unchartered freedom.' The hatred, which leads us necessarily to destroy what we hate, can never be good (Part 4, Prop. 45), if the object of the hatred is another man; for

to hate, and seek to destroy a human being is, at once, to aim at his impotence; and also to seek to deprive ourselves of the power, or *virtus*, which he, as well as ourselves, enjoys as part of Nature as a whole, and as expressing God in a definite and determinate way. This idea of the essential solidarity of men in virtue of their moral nature is one of Spinoza's leading principles, which will reappear and be further elucidated in other connections.

But the aspect of it with which we are dealing at the moment, involves, that nothing is so large an element of the good (or goodness) of the individual, as the attitude which he adopts toward other men. Nothing can be so good for him as such a temper of mind as will unite him with them, and them with him; while nothing, on the contrary, can be so bad for, or in, him as that which sets him and them at variance. Now hatred necessarily sets a man at variance with what he hates; this is indeed its nature. And to be at variance with another is to seek his harm. But he who seeks another's harm injures himself no less than he injures him. Thus hatred toward any other man can never be good or virtuous.

And, what is true of hatred, holds good equally of all the emotions which can spring out of it. Envy, Mockery, Contempt, Anger, Revenge, etc., are all bad; for "in so far as men entertain toward one another envy, or any emotion of hatred, they are thus far in antagonism with one another" (Part 4, Append., § 10). "The strong man (*vir fortis*) hates no one, is angry at no one, envies no one, is indignant at no one, despises no one, and is not at all proud. . . . He strives to conceive things as they are in themselves, and to remove the obstacles to true knowledge, which arise from hatred, anger, envy, mockery, pride, etc." (Part 4, Prop. 73, Schol.). And the taint of such bad emotions makes actions bad. "No action or activity considered in itself is good or bad, but one and the same action is at one time good, at another bad. And any action is called bad in so far as it springs from the fact that we are affected with hatred or some bad emotion" (Part 4, Prop. 59, Dem. II.). In other words, that only is bad for or in a man which tends to render his

interest and those of others antagonistic, and so to prevent mutual understanding and co-operation.

Moreover, this negative attitude of spirit is a weak one. It does not conquer the spirit of him who is the object of hate, for "spirits are conquered not by force but by love and *generositas*" (Part 4, Append., § 11). It does not bring happiness to him who hates, for by giving rise, as it necessarily does, to a reciprocal hatred, it makes him lead a wretched existence. And it prevents the man discovering that positive perfection, or activity of soul, in which the abiding satisfaction of both 'the other' and the self is to be found. Thus it springs, in Spinoza's language, from 'confused and inadequate thinking.'

On the other hand, hate *can* be overcome by love or *generositas*; nay, not only overcome, but so transmuted that its strength passes into the conqueror (see Part 3, Prop. 44), while even the conquered does not lose but gain. "He who seeks to overcome hatred by love fights with joy and confidence, withstands with equal ease one man or several, and is hardly at all dependent on the help of fortune. While those whom he vanquishes joyously give up the struggle, and that not from the exhaustion of their resources but from an enlargement of them" (Part 4, Prop. 46, Schol.). In this case the victory is not that of one particular interest over another, but the victory of a principle, the conscious recognition of which enables men to unite with one another.

We have seen, then, that nothing so deeply concerns the individual's welfare as his relations with other men; and that whatever puts these on a positive footing, productive of concord and mutual help, is good and desirable. This is true even in the case of men who are ignorant, and do not follow the guidance of Reason. "For although men are ignorant, they are still men and can in exigencies bring human help, than which there is none more valuable" (Part 4, Prop. 70, Schol.). But it is truer in the case of men who do order their lives according to the dictates of Reason, since here the 'help' which they can bring to one another springs from a much more adequate knowledge of what is really for the good of others, and extends to a much wider circle of

objects of satisfaction. They can be of service in innumerable ways, which those who are ignorant, or who follow their passions, cannot know or will.

Thus, while the individual can find nothing in the world so 'useful' to him as other men, amongst these, the 'most useful' will be those who live according to Reason.

"There is nothing of more advantage to a man for preserving his being and enjoying a rational life, than a man who is guided by Reason" (Part 4, Append., § 9). "There is no particular object in the universe more useful to a man, than a man who lives after the guidance of Reason. For that is most for a man's advantage which most agrees with his own nature, that is, a man. And a man acts absolutely according to the laws of his own nature, when he lives after the guidance of Reason" (Part 4, Prop. 35, Cor. 1). "Men are then of most service to one another when each is most earnest in seeking his own welfare. For the more each man seeks his own welfare, and endeavours to preserve himself, the more is he endowed with virtue, or—what is the same thing—the greater is the power with which he is endowed for acting according to the laws of his own nature, that is, for living according to the guidance of Reason. And men do then most agree in nature, when they live after the rule of Reason. Therefore, men will then be of most service to one another when each most anxiously seeks for himself his own welfare" (*Ibid.*, Cor. 2).

Hence, there is no force which does so much to produce and strengthen positive bonds of union among men, to make and keep them social, as that Reason which determines for each wherein his true good is to be found. And if Reason be the principle which leads each man to regard his own '*utile*,' as the beginning and end of all morality; it is also the principle which shows that he, without others, 'cannot be made perfect'; and that his own '*utile*' is of such a nature that it can be attained in, and by, him only in proportion as others also seek and find it. Indeed Spinoza's contention is, that men are social as they are rational; and that their sociality is in proportion to the insight which they have into their good. Were they quite rational, they 'would not learn the art of war any more.' "Free men alone [that is, the men whose conduct is guided by Reason] are of most service to one another; and are held together by the greatest need of one another's friendship, and seek to do one another kindness out of an equal eagerness of affection" (Part 4, Prop. 71, Dem.).

This idea, that the good of the individual as determined by Reason is *necessarily* a social good, Spinoza contends for in many passages. "The *summum bonum* of those who follow virtue is common to all, and in it all are alike able to rejoice" (Part 4, Prop. 36). "The good which each man who follows virtue desires for himself, he will wish also for the rest of men ; and he will do so the more, the greater the knowledge which he has of God. . . . The good which a man desires for himself and loves, he will love with all the more constancy, if he sees that others love the same thing. Thus he will endeavour to make others love the same thing. And as this good is common to all, and in it all can rejoice, he will therefore endeavour to make all rejoice in it, and he will do so the more the greater his own enjoyment of it" (*Ibid.*, Prop. 37). Spinoza even makes use of his principle from the other side, as Kant afterwards did systematically, to show that what cannot be universalised, or made a common principle of action for all, is not a rule of Reason for any one. For to prove that "the free man never acts deceitfully but always with fidelity" (Part 4, Prop. 72), he points out that "if the free man did, in so far as he is free, act with guile, he would do so from the dictate of Reason ; and so it would be a *virtus* to act with guile. Consequently it would be more advisable for *every one*, in order to maintain his being, to act with guile ; that is, it would be more in men's interest to agree in words only and to be really at variance with one another. A conclusion whose absurdity is self-evident."

Spinoza's point of view would, I think, be better expressed, by saying that only a moral principle can be universally willed ; than by saying that only a principle capable of being universally willed can be a moral one. He undoubtedly holds that both statements are true ; but he develops his argument mainly along the former line, and touches upon the latter only as one of its consequences. It is because the good is of a certain type that it at once satisfies the individual's desire for self-satisfaction, and links others to him in devotion to the same end.

"Only in so far as men live after the guidance of Reason do they always necessarily agree in nature" (Part 4, Prop. 35). "There is

nothing more excellent, which men can desire for the preservation of their being, than that all should so agree in everything, that the Minds and the Bodies of all form, as it were, one Mind and one Body ; and that all should at once endeavour to preserve their own being as far as possible, and should, at the same time, seek for themselves the common good of all. It follows from this, that men, who seek their own welfare after the guidance of Reason, desire nothing for themselves which they do not wish for the rest of men " (Part 4, Prop. 18, Schol.).

Thus social relationships rest upon the recognition by men of a certain kind of life as desirable. They presuppose a power in each man to will such a life, and to desire it, not as affording a purely personal satisfaction, but as a '*commune utile*' or a '*commune bonum*,' a good which is all the more increased for him, the more there are who will it (Part 5, Prop. 20). It is because the 'free man' is alive to the value of the best interests for which men *can* unite, that he fights shy of social ties which are based upon a devotion to lower ones. He will generally prefer to dispense with favours from those who estimate things by another standard than his ; for they will expect to be repaid in their own coin, and not in his ; and will be angry with him if they are not (Part 4, Prop. 70). The gifts of a harlot will not move him to gratify her lust, nor those of a thief lead him to conceal his thefts. "For in this he gives evidence of a steadfast spirit that he does not allow any gifts to betray him to his own, and the general, ruin." It is for the same reason, that not all love, or the concord and social ties to which it gives rise, is good or consonant with Reason. No love indeed save that which springs from, and aims at, enlargement of soul (*libertas animi*), is really good, or productive of true and abiding harmony. "All other love readily changes to hate, unless—what is worse—it be a kind of madness, and then it is more productive of discord than of harmony" (Part 4, Append., § 19).

What Spinoza seeks to demonstrate is that it is a law of man's moral being that his good is *necessarily* a common good ; and that the more each seeks his own best, the stronger and more enduring will be the ties that bind men to one another ; while apart from such *fortitudo animi*, or resolute devotion to the good, no stable friendship or social

life is attainable. The second half of this thesis will be dealt with in the following chapters. The first half of it, being but the logical issue of the foregoing argument, needs little further elaboration. "If," says Spinoza, "anyone should ask, what if the *summum bonum* of those who follow virtue should not be common to all? Would it not then follow that men who live according to the guidance of Reason, that is, men in so far as they agree in nature, would be in antagonism to one another? To this my reply would be, that it is not by accident, but from the very nature of Reason, that a man's *summum bonum* is common to all. That is to say, it is deduced from the very essence of man, in so far as that is defined by Reason. And a man could neither be, nor be conceived, if he had not the power of rejoicing in this *summum bonum*" (Part 4, Prop. 36, Schol.).

It is for this reason that Spinoza presses so hard the principle that only as a man knows and desires what is really good for the human nature, or the humanity, in himself can he so treat, or, if you like, so make use of, others as to bind them to himself in common devotion to the same ideal of human nature. "Only in so far as men live according to the guidance of Reason, do they necessarily do those things which are necessarily good for human nature, and consequently for each man, that is, which agree with the nature of each man" (Part 4, Prop. 35, Dem.). Similarly, in the Preface to Part 4 of the *Ethics*, after having pointed out that "Good and bad indicate nothing positive in things considered in themselves, but are only modes of thought, or notions which we form from a comparison of things with one another," Spinoza continues, "yet must we retain these terms. For we wish to frame an ideal (*exemplar*) of human nature, which we may set before us. Thus it will be well to retain these terms in the sense of which I have spoken." The importance of this statement will be more apparent if we contrast it with an earlier stage of thought in the *Ethics*.

In Part 3, good was presented as not only relative to the individual, but as all that satisfies desire in the individual, "whatever be the nature of the desire," even if it be the

desire of the miser for money, or that of the ambitious man for fame. From this point of view, anything is good for a man which he judges to be for his good; and this each estimates according to his own ruling passion. But in Part 4 we have risen to another conception of good. While it is still relative to the individual, it is no longer determined by any and every desire, nor constituted by any and every judgment. It is now "what we know assuredly to be for our welfare" (Part 4, Def. 1), or what the man, as guided by Reason, would judge to be good for him. It is no less relative, individual, subjective, or personal, in the latter case, than it was in the former; but it has now the validity, or worth, which comes from an adequate knowledge of, or a true judgment upon, the facts; for "what we, according to the dictate of Reason, judge to be good or bad, necessarily is good or bad" (Part 4, Prop. 35, Dem., and Part 2, Prop. 41). Thus, as determined by Reason, the good reveals itself as the *utilitas* of the individual as a whole, or the *summum bonum* by relation to which other things are good, or desirable, as means to this end, or as the *summa cupiditas* through which the *conatus sese conservandi* can alone find complete satisfaction. Such a judgment does not destroy the right of each individual to judge what is good for himself; but it shows that not all that each man supposes to be for his good really is so; and that, if he pass judgment solely *ex suo affectu*, and not *ex rationis ductu*, his judgment of what would constitute his welfare, will, in most cases, be very erroneous. For it is the prerogative of Reason to understand, "the essence of Reason being indeed nothing but our Mind in so far as it understands clearly and distinctly" (Part 4, Prop. 26, Dem.). Thus what Reason determines regarding a man's nature, and what constitutes the good of that nature, and how he may attain that good, is so far from being an encroachment upon the individual's free judgment of what is for his advantage, that only so is his judgment really free, that is, enlightened, or determined simply by his own adequate knowledge of the objects of his desire. Reason, instead of extinguishing the *conatus in suo esse perseverandi*, which prompts each man to seek his own *utile*, raises it to the

highest energy by showing what will really satisfy it; and thus delivers the man who, because he does not know what he wants, or what his nature craves, is constantly at variance with himself through contrary desires, hopes, and fears, and at enmity with others through his lust, greed, and ambition. "As Reason requires of us nothing contrary to Nature, it therefore requires that everyone love himself, and seek his own welfare (*utile*), *quod revera utile est*" (Part 4, Part 18, Schol.).

But this, we have already seen, is capable of being *found* only in something, which is, at the same time, the true welfare of others also. Thus the real good of the individual is relative to a "human nature" which is common to him with them, and it is his good only as it will stand this test, and bear to be thus objectified. In so far as it does so, we may set it before ourselves as "an ideal of human nature to which we may approach ever nearer, and we shall call men more perfect or more imperfect according as they approximate more or less to this exemplar" (Part 4, Pref.). For the *conatus sese conservandi* is far from being an impulse that is easily satisfied in any creature, least of all in man. In him it is at bottom a "*conatus intelligendi*," and nothing is so insatiable as the desire to know. For this reason, the man who acts rationally will welcome all that will "really advance him to greater perfection." He will value all *Laetitia*, or increase of power in his own spirit, all transition from a less to a greater perfection, so long as it is not merely the increased power of a part of his nature at the expense of the rest. And he will be prepared to sacrifice a less good for a greater, a present pleasure for a distant attainment, a benefit which by its nature necessarily excludes others for one in which they can share; nay, he will even look upon grief and pain as tending to restore the equilibrium of a nature prone to be carried away by "those violent delights," which "in their triumphs die." But such sacrifices he will make, without regarding them as (what they are not) *self-sacrifices*. He will choose them, because the 'human nature,' or the humanity, in himself as well as in others, will thereby rise to a higher perfection. Any reward of, or

motive to, such 'well-doing,' other than the 'well-doing' itself, he will not desire or admit. This is morality (*pietas*) in a form adequate to it, for *pietas* is "the desire of well-doing which arises from the fact that we are living after the guidance of Reason" (Part 4, Prop. 37, Schol. 1).

If there be any reward of devotion to such an ideal in oneself and in others, it can only be such as is inseparable from such devotion itself, that peace of Mind (*acquiescentia Mentis*) which necessarily springs from the enjoyment, or the exercise, of one's greatest perfection.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GOOD AS THE PRINCIPLE OF SOCIALITY.

SPINOZA, then, strenuously maintains that the ideal of human existence, and the true interest, or happiness, of each man, can only be attained, if each realise, or assert, his individuality through those activities which, by their very nature, lead others to know and seek the same end. In so far as men are virtuous, they desire and promote a common good; and such a common good is the only basis of social relations. Nay, not the basis merely, since the measure or depth of men's sociality is in exact proportion to the rationality, or the utility for human nature, of the ends they severally seek. They can be quite social only when they are quite virtuous.

The question, therefore, with which we have now to grapple is, wherein does such virtue or social concord consist, what forms of expression does it assume, and what conditions of life will best promote and maintain it? The *fact* that man is social because, and in so far as, he is rational, it was the object of the last chapter to prove, but it still remains to enquire in what ways this rational nature reveals itself, and what can be done to develop and sustain it.

Spinoza has pointed out that the *Fortitudo*, which is his general name for the distinctive activities of human nature, is a double-sided principle. On the one hand it is a self-regarding principle, *Animositas*, "the desire by which each man endeavours to preserve his own being according to the dictates of Reason alone"; but on the other, and no less, it

is an other-regarding, or altruistic, principle, *Generositas*, "the desire by which each endeavours to be of service to others according to the dictate of Reason alone, and to unite them to himself by friendship." Self-control, sobriety, and presence of mind are species of *animositas*; and even morality and religion may be so classed (Part 4, Prop. 37, Schol. 1). While *modestia*, clemency, etc., are species of *generositas*, and to the same class belong also justice, equity, integrity, humanity.

Now regarding these virtues certain points which Spinoza develops in different places should be kept in view if his meaning is to be justly apprehended. (1) They are all expressions of one principle. (2) Both the self-regarding, and the other-regarding, virtues have the same objects or ends. They differ, not in what is to be attained and enjoyed, but in the persons who are to attain it. Whatever distinction there may be between them arises from this fact, and will, therefore, be mainly a distinction of modes of expression, and of means. (3) The social concord of men is not due exclusively, or even mainly, to the other-regarding virtues, but quite as much to the self-assertive ones. Self-control and sobriety, right judgment and chastity, have as much to do with the peace and welfare of society, as they have with the individual's own happiness; and if they are primarily self-regarding they are no more selfish, or antagonistic to the well-being of others, than kindness or clemency. (4) The other-regarding virtues are in no respect inferior or posterior in human nature to the self-assertive ones. They are as much part of man's essential nature as these are, and in as little danger of being thrust aside. Any misconception or neglect which taints the one, will reveal itself no less in the other, as both are but different expressions of the same nature. (5) Other-regarding impulses are no more necessarily virtuous than self-assertive ones. They can show no title to be infallible judgments of what is good for others, and do not necessarily tend to promote peace and concord, any more than actions prompted by what we call self-interest. We can desire what is bad for others, while supposing it to be good for

them, just as readily as we may do in our own case. An other-regarding desire is *virtuous* only in respect of the end, or object, or kind of life, which it promotes, and not in respect of the persons in whom it promotes it.

From these premises Spinoza argues, indifferently, that whatever is really virtuous in the individual necessarily makes for social concord, and that whatever brings about real concord of men with one another is necessarily virtuous for each of them. In the main (but by no means exclusively) his argument in the *Ethics* follows the former line of thought, and his argument in the *Politics* the latter. What he tries to show is, that each individual in society is seeking his welfare no less than he would do if he had no one but himself to think of; but that if he is to find it in a society he must recognise certain objective ends as binding upon him as well as upon others, and must observe certain conditions, the violation of which would render these ends unattainable by himself or by any one else.

What are these common ends, and conditions of common welfare? The ends are those which Reason, as we have already seen, prescribes for each man as constituting his essential well-being and well-doing; while the conditions are all such rules and regulations of conduct as tend to make the individual understand that nothing will be of advantage to him which is not also for the advantage of others; and by thus making him understand, to make him desire such a common end.

Hence social concord will spring, on the one hand, from a true apprehension by the individual of those things which, in Spinoza's words, "are first in life"; and on the other, from a sense that the attainment and enjoyment of such things by one man depends on others also participating in them. This indeed is not the only kind of concord, or pseudo-concord, conceivable. A sort of concord can be brought about by fear, by pity, by gratitude for favours, by flattery, by self-distrust, and even by ambition (see Part 4, Append., §§ 16-25). But in no case is such concord true or lasting, because it is not founded on a recognition of '*libertas animi*' in, and by, each man as the essence of social harmony. Fear, for instance, may prevent outward strife,

but it does not promote mutual confidence ; while depending, as it does, on 'impotence of spirit' in those who fear, it weakens the society to which they belong. So pity, flattery, and self-distrust may *discourage* open collision of interest ; but they do so at the expense of the manhood (*virtus*) of *both* parties in the case, since they do not *encourage* in each that regard for the humanity in himself and in others, on which alone a lasting social harmony can be based. Pity and self-distrust have a show of goodness, but want its substance ; while flattery buys (what calls itself) concord by "the foul crime" of enslaving men, or by the perfidy which deceives them regarding themselves. Even kindness and gratitude do not necessarily give rise to lasting harmony, for kindliness is not always kind, human nature sits uneasily under favours, and gratitude only makes for true concord when it involves the receiving of the 'best things.' Ambition too has the *form* of sociality, as it springs from a desire to make oneself liked by men, or to make them like and dislike the things which we think they should ; but it lacks the *power* of a social cement, and most often leads rather to discord and strife than to unity, because it seeks to unite men in the promotion of ends which are not for their interest, and in the endeavour after which they cannot therefore be really in agreement (see Part 3, Prop. 29, Schol.). The ambitious man does not know that men will not long be content to like what he likes, or even to like what they like themselves, unless each is seeking what is "good for human nature and therefore for each man."

But the social harmony which can find no firm foundation for itself in fear, pity, flattery, charitable aid, or ambition, can be produced and maintained on the basis of religion and morality, of justice, equity, and honour or humanity (Part 4, Append., § 15). These are the only conditions upon which permanent relations can be established,¹ since they have in view what is necessarily good for human nature.

¹ Cf. *Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 8, § 6 : "Men under the influence of any bad emotion are brought into collision with one another, nor can they be led, so to speak, by one mind, except in so far as they desire *honesty*, or at least those things which have the appearance of being honourable."

"The desire of acting well, which springs from the fact that we live after the guidance of Reason, I call morality (*pietas*). While the desire by which the man who lives after the guidance of Reason *is bound* to unite others to himself by friendship, I call *honestas*. I call that honourable (*honestum*) which men who live by the leading of Reason praise; and that base (*turpe*) which prevents men forming friendly ties" (Part 4, Prop. 37, Schol. 1). "Men who are governed by Reason, that is to say, men who seek their own welfare in accordance with the rule of Reason, desire nothing for themselves which they do not wish for others, *and so* such men are just, faithful, and honourable (*honestos*)" (Part 4, Prop. 18, Schol.).

The objection will no doubt occur to the reader, that after all the desire of uniting others with ourselves in devotion to the Good is secondary to the desire for our own welfare, and will therefore in practice tend to be neglected. Against this, however, we have to set the fact, that the desire of making ourselves agreeable to men, or making them agreeable to us, is one of the deepest and strongest impulses of our nature. In the form of Ambition its power is universally recognised. For it is then "the desire by which all emotions are fostered and strengthened. Thus this emotion can hardly be exceeded, for as long as a man is swayed by any desire this one necessarily rules him at the same time. Even the philosophers, as Cicero says, who write treatises on the worthlessness of fame, put their own names to their works" (Part 3, Append., § 44). But it is not so generally recognised that the same impulse which, under the name of ambition, is so powerful for strife and envy, works, or may work, no less powerfully for human welfare and harmony under the name of *Humanitas* or *Modestia*, which is (Part 4, Append., § 25) "the desire of pleasing men which is determined by Reason." The difference between ambition, and regard for the humanity in oneself and in others, consists simply in the difference between an inadequate and an adequate judgment of what is our real good, and the basis of lasting social ties; or in the difference of the objects or ends through which we endeavour to make others 'be of the same mind' with us. If men understood themselves, they would be no less eager to promote in others, and in themselves, that '*libertas animi*' which is the '*felicitas et beatitudo*' of

each man's nature, than they now are to achieve for themselves, and to make others the willing, or the unwilling, instruments of, ends that bring no true satisfaction (*acquiescentia*) to either.

It follows logically from this, that each man's true good is always common, and that on the basis of such a recognition of human welfare alone can real and permanent community of interest rest. There is nothing in the nature of men's interests which *necessarily* makes them anti-social. "If men lived according to the guidance of Reason, each would enjoy his own rights without doing anything to the injury of another" (Part 4, Prop. 37, Schol. II). Yet, for one who holds that true goodness is the only social force, Spinoza shows a curious reluctance to accept the Aristotelian dictum that 'man is a social being.' In the two passages (Part 4, Prop. 35, Schol., and *Tract. Pol.* II. 15), in which he refers to it, his acceptance of the idea is qualified in its terms, and by no means eager in tone. The explanation of this critical caution can be found, I think, if we turn to another element in his philosophy. And if separated from this other element, what has been said conveys only a half-truth.

For what has been depicted is an *exemplar* of human nature, that highest good which all men may set before themselves, and in which they may find satisfaction. It is such a *summum bonum*, because it alone realises what every man is seeking, viz. happiness, or peace of spirit. All men seek it, but few find it; since they do not know what they really want. For "happiness and unhappiness depend on the quality of the objects which we love" (*Tract. de Intell. Emend.*). And if each man always sought what was best for him, men would never stand in one another's way, but each would be the helper of the other's *laetitia*, or progress to perfection.

"If we make proper use of our Reason, we cannot cherish toward anything hatred or aversion, because by so doing we would thereby deprive ourselves of the perfection which each thing has. And Reason teaches us, also, that we should never hate any one, seeing that we should always change for the better—whether better for us, or for the thing itself—all that exists in nature, if it come within our influence. And because a perfect man is the best thing which the world presents us with,

it is thus for us, and for each individual man, the best course to endeavour to lead men at all times to this perfection, since only then will we have most profit from them, and they from us" (*Short Treatise*, Part 2, Ch. 6, §§ 6 and 7).

This is the ideal, the truth, of human nature, the law which man's nature as a rational or thinking being imposes upon him. For to live according to the dictates of Reason is simply to have thought out the nature and conditions of our happiness. It is not simply to love the best we *know*, but to be dissatisfied with anything short of knowing the *best* (see *Short Treatise*, Part 2, Ch. 5). To be resolute to understand, is the '*summus conatus*' of man's nature. Men love, and attach themselves to, objects that may come and go, and even to objects like wealth, pleasure, honour "that have no real existence at all," because they don't know what they should seek, nor understand the dim, but imperious, strivings of their nature. If they knew their own best, they would be no less eager to share it, and make all others 'partakers of their joy,' than they now are to narrow its range. At present they shut others out, but in the very same degree they shut themselves in.

No one, then, ever held more tenaciously than Spinoza, the principle, that man is by nature a social being, if 'nature' means in this connection the 'truth or ideal' of human nature. Indeed, he gives this principle a wider sweep than most other writers have done, and shows that it is no less true of man's intellectual and moral being than of his physical cravings, and political impulses. Nay, he goes further, and holds that, in many respects, the latter are the proof of anti-social tendencies. This point will come up immediately. But what cannot be denied is, that the endeavour after perfection of knowledge, and of moral character, in ourselves and in others, is necessarily not only a complete and self-sufficient good, but also a common one, which is the more fostered in each man the more it is developed in others also. In this there can be no rivalry, save that which is inspired by *generositas*, and no egoism save the steadfast love of goodness.

If then Spinoza holds that each man's true good is neces-

sarily a social good, why does he hesitate to accept the principle that man is naturally a social or political being? For two reasons. (1) The dictum as thus broadly stated seems to him misleading, even untrue. (2) It fails to recognise the recalcitrant elements that find a place in human existence, and constitute the hardest part of the moral problem.

Spinoza has been blamed by almost every student of his *Ethics* for taking little or no account of the negative in morality. He seems not to admit that there is such a thing as sin or moral evil, a struggle to overcome temptation, a daily war to be waged, a law of the members warring against the law of the mind, a stern moral resolution to "rise on stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things." He seems to represent the moral problem as simply a problem in Mathematics, in the solution of which emotion would be out of place. For this view there is some foundation if we take the *Ethics* by itself. It is not *quite* true even of it, but it is practically correct. Yet it would be strange if Spinoza were blind to such an element in what most intensely interested him. And it would be still stranger, if he could have read St. Paul—who has influenced his moral theory more, perhaps, than any single writer—and missed his most insistent message. The misapprehension—for such I believe it to be—has arisen simply from separating two sides of life which, to Spinoza, were always joined, the ethical and the political. He does not set forth the nature and the conditions of moral progress in the *Ethics*, because *that* is not the special task of that book. Its aim is to determine (1) whether there is an end or ideal of human nature which is intrinsically good for each man, and necessarily a source of social harmony; and (2) if there is such a good, what is its nature? In the discussion of these problems the 'negative' has no proper place; for Spinoza contends that whatever be the use of pain, evil, sorrow, sin, disappointment, they are not, and cannot be, the end, or any part of the end, of man's *conatus* to be and to achieve. But, having considered and established the nature of the *summum bonum* for man, we have to deal next with the question, how can he attain this good, what process does it involve, what conditions of life does it require,

what sort of education and discipline will be most likely to promote it, what weapons and means lie to our hand for the furtherance of it in ourselves and in others, and how can we make the most effective use of these? It is this set of questions which is purposely excluded from the *Ethics* that they may be thoroughly discussed elsewhere.¹ And they are discussed, partly in the *Tract. de Intell. Emend.*, and mainly in the two Political Treatises. This is, to Spinoza, the very task of Politics, to conquer the negative and make it yield a higher positive, to make men will the good before they know it, to lead them through pain and tribulation if need be to that *acquiescentia* in the true and good, which is *the* end for man.

I know no philosopher who is so resolute to know the weakness and frailty of human nature, as Spinoza. St. Paul and Machiavelli might have claimed him as their greatest disciple. Not even Hobbes or the Puritan Theologians have gone so deeply into the study of moral pathology. He is as merciless as the surgeon, though with the same end in view; and human nature in its nakedness, its wickedness, its greed, its envy, and its lust is as absorbing an object of study to him as the *libertas animi* which can find its satisfaction only in the love of God. These two 'passions to know' are but sides of the same interest. He can look on human nature at its worst, and not be ashamed of it; because he knows what it can be made, or what can be made of it. But he refuses to prescribe at all, until he has brought into clear consciousness the worst that can be conceived.

If any one labours under the impression that Spinoza treats the 'hurt of man's spirit' slightly, or would but 'skin and film the ulcerous place,' he can be undeceived. For the author of the *Ethics* proceeds to an analysis of human motive and character more merciless and searching than any satire ever penned by Juvenal or by Swift. He passes without any sense of incongruity from the Heaven in which "he who loves God cannot ask that God should love him in return,"

¹ Kuno Fischer has already properly pointed out that the *Ethics* and the *Politics* were mutually related in Spinoza's thought. And it is also to be noted, that the main lines of his political theory were already before the world in the *Theol.-Pol.*, before the *Ethics* was completed.

to the Hell—the actual Hell of human life as he calls it in the *Short Treatise*—in which the most cruel, faithless, greedy, and lustful of all the animals live out their lives. And the problem to which he sets himself is to understand how this gulf is, or has been, bridged. Through what process, and by what means, has the lower brute nature of man become subservient to the higher? How has Reason obtained the measure of mastery which it has secured, and how may its reign over the passions and strifes of men be yet further extended?

The answer to these questions might seem to be a simple deduction from principles already proved. For was it not shown in the *Ethics* that if men are ruled by any passion, and do not love and seek the best for themselves, a best which must be also the common good of all, this can be due only to ignorance? Men necessarily desire the best thing they know. What else, then, is required for social and individual welfare, than that confused or inadequate knowledge should in each man be changed into true and adequate knowledge? If this be all, it is surely not a herculean task. Spinoza's reply to this is: nothing else is necessary or desirable. This is the end, the whole and complete end of human existence; but it is an end so difficult and arduous that all the forces, organised and unorganised, which experience and reason can bring to bear upon it achieve but a partial success. It is the end which States, Churches, Institutions, Laws, Public Opinion, Education, Moral Philosophy, Logic, and all the Sciences, and Arts, are labouring to realise—to make men *think rightly* about themselves and their happiness and their relations with others. Men always act as they think. What they don't do they don't believe in. If they act badly it is because they 'believe a lie.'

How to change this 'lie of the soul' (to use Plato's phrase) into the knowledge of, that is into belief in, the truth, is the single task upon which civilisation expends all its energies; and the manifold and varied agencies through which it finds it necessary to work upon men's thoughts are the proof that the task is not so simple as it appears to be.

CHAPTER XII.

THE *JUS NATURAE*.

THERE is, happily, no occasion to enter on the vexed question of the many and varied meanings this phrase has acquired in its passage down the stream of human thought. The 'Law of Nature' has now fallen on evil days. Once, "none too proud to do it reverence," now a poor relation which everywhere gets the cold shoulder. I sometimes think, indeed, that despite the weight of insult that has 'erupted' on its head, it has only to bide its time to be amply revenged. At the moment, however, there is no call to act the part of the knight-errant to this distressed theory. What alone concerns us is Spinoza's use of the phrase, and its place in his political philosophy.

For the sake of brevity and clearness, I shall first set down dogmatically the conclusions I have reached on this point, and shall afterwards endeavour to prove them in detail. To put the case negatively in the first instance, The *Jus Naturae* has to Spinoza no moral reference. Neither is it a social instinct, such as prompts animals to go in herds, or men to live in families and tribes. Neither is it a divine, or religious, law to which men ought to conform. It holds true of man only in the sense in which it is true of everything else in the world. It is not a 'Law' or command at all.

Putting the matter positively, the *Jus Naturae* is (1) in each and every case a *potentia*, or power, or set of powers, vested in some particular thing or person. (2) It is thus not a Law but a right, a claim upon the world, a right over the world (*jus in naturam*), not only in the abstract, but as

a concrete *power* of enforcing the claim. (3) It is in each and every instance the power of God, or a divine power, and divine right, expressing itself in, and through, that particular object or being. (4) The nature of the *jus* depends on, or is displayed, in each instance, by, the peculiar powers, capacities, energies, or distinctive life which resides in that particular existence. (The *Jus Naturae* of a man and of a stone are alike rights, or powers, conferred on them by God, but they are not the *same* rights or powers; they do not work in the same way, nor are they capable of the same unfolding) (5) Some existences have more right, *i.e.* divine right—for all right is ultimately divine right, or power—than others; and they have this larger right just because they have more of God's power dwelling in them. A man has larger rights over a lion than the lion can have over him, because the man is stronger than the lion, stronger not in brute force—which is the lowest and weakest kind of strength—but in intelligence, will, the power of uniting with others, the power of making weapons of offence and defence, and even the power which superior cunning and strategy give. (6) For the same reason a Society, whether organised into a State, or in the embryonic condition of a tribe or a clan, has rights over the individual man; and the rights which he may enjoy in and through such a Society are the rights belonging to and maintained by such a larger 'unit of existence,' not rights which are inherent in him as an individual man, or even as, *directly*, a son of God. (7) A Society, or the organised Society which we call a State, has the highest 'divine right' which yet exists in the world. It has this, because it fosters and develops new 'powers' in man which would not otherwise come into existence. It makes man moral, or at least furnishes the conditions necessary for morality, for religion, for intellectual development, for new ties and bonds of interest and advantage which bind men more and more closely together. The State is the strongest thing which God has yet made, because the 'powers' here mentioned, morality, religion, science, industrial co-operation, are the strongest forces the world knows, and they owe their unfolding to the fostering care of an organised

Society. (8) Each State is strong and stable as it works for and through these powers, and maintains that kind of peace and concord among its citizens which consists "not in the absence of war but in the union and concord of souls." It is a State, and has security for its own permanence, in precisely the same degree in which it rules for, and in, righteousness. (9) In so far as it does this, it is the Kingdom of God established on the earth; with sacred rights and privileges which cannot be called in question by any man or body of men; and it may by divine right use all and every means to give to "the teachings of right reason," to "Justice and Love," the force of Law, and the supremacy which they ought to, and can, have over appetite and envy and hatred.

This seems to be Spinoza's main line of argument in his theory of the State. And it will now be our duty to follow out his ideas in detail, and try to discover how these principles are conceived and developed by him.

It should be noted, first of all, that though Spinoza is undertaking an enquiry only into the nature and conditions of political rights, he thinks it necessary to correlate these with other rights, which are neither social nor political. To this Green has taken exception, on the ground that it is a survival in Spinoza's mind of the fiction of the *Jus Naturae*, which conferred rights upon the individual man irrespective of whether he belonged to a Society or not; and he contends that 'right' has no meaning save within a community in which mutual obligations hold good. This objection, however, is no objection to what Spinoza is trying to do here; and, as will be pointed out later, no one is more ready to emphasise the social aspect of 'right' than he is. The question, however, at the moment is, whence does man, or society itself, derive its rights? How has the State the power to set itself up, and maintain itself, as the guardian and defender of social rights and obligations? What is its place, and function, and relation, not to the individuals who enjoy its rights, and obey or disobey its laws, but to the rest of the universe of which it is, after all, only a part? Whence does it get the right to constitute itself the 'earthly providence' which it is, or should be, to all who are under its

care? By what charter does it erect itself in time and space an (*imperium in imperio*), ambitious to cope with all chances, and to use the world as the instrument of its special ends?

The only possible answer to this question is that the powers or rights vested in the State as a whole are the sum of the powers, or the rights, vested in the individual men who compose it. Neither in heaven, nor on earth, has it any resource save the men who live and labour in, and for, it. If they have no rights, powers, energies of mind and body, it has none either. Their weakness is its impotence; their strength is its power. This does not mean, that if society be dissolved into units, the sum of the powers, or weaknesses, of these units will be the strength of the community as a united whole. Spinoza recognises that such an idea is absurd. Not only do all men "out of fear of solitude," always have social ties of some kind, but also "those who live in a state of barbarism without a political order of life (*politia*) spend a wretched and almost a brutish existence; and even those few things, wretched and rude, which they do possess, are not procured without mutual assistance such as there is" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 5). The sum of the social units is the whole they constitute when united. What kind of sum they would constitute if they were all separate no one can tell, as such a supposition is inherently self-contradictory. To know, then, the nature and limits of Society's rights in the universe, we must analyse these constituent units. It is not enough to say each of them is a social force which can exist only in the company of its fellow. That is true, but only a part, and not even, to Spinoza, the deepest part of the truth. For, deeper than any social or civil relation, lie the relations which connect man with God. The individual could not live or develop without his fellows; but, without God, neither they nor he would be at all. Social ties are necessary if man is to be man, but neither man nor society is necessary except as God willed or decreed that man should exist with a definite nature which—because it is a nature of this special kind—necessarily calls for, or expresses itself in, a social life. Thus

Spinoza contends that the State did not make man. But God made man ; and man, in the exercise of the reason and will with which God endowed him, called the State into being, to be the instrument and stimulus of his progress. As we shall see later, there is much the State can do, much that it alone can do ; but there is also much which it cannot possibly do, spheres, sides and interests of man's life to which its *modus operandi* is not adapted. It is a means, the highest of all means, but not the end of human blessedness. And the mystic majesty in which it is clothed is not that which belongs to God ; but only that which belongs to the noblest of instruments, which God's wisdom in man has fashioned for human progress toward the best life.

Thus to discover the powers or rights of the State, what it can and cannot do, is a prior problem to that of discovering how the State can best apportion these rights amongst (and enforce the corresponding obligations upon) its citizens. And this prior problem can be solved only by asking what powers or characteristic qualities belong to each of the individuals who in their union with one another constitute a Society or a State. It is the welfare of individuals which is the beginning and the end of all organised life in a community. Thus, to know the nature of this welfare, and the end of all social organisation, we must consider man's place in the universe as a whole. What powers, capacities, activities, does he enjoy in virtue of his place in it ? What can he do which nothing else can do ? What achievements are open to him which are closed to every other existence ? How far, in what manner, and to what end, can he assert himself in, and through, the system to which he belongs ?

These are man's rights, or the *Jus Naturae* in him. They are the basis, or the source, of the idea of the State, or of Civil Right itself ; and are, therefore, prior in nature, if not in time, to these. They are the powers which God has conferred upon each individual, or through which God 'expresses' or reveals himself in him. If it be objected, that they are only 'natural powers,' not 'civil rights,' Spinoza admits this, but contends that except in, and through these natural powers, there would be no Civil Rights, no State, no

Justice or Injustice. His question at the moment is, What makes it possible for man to devise and maintain a Civil Order, for a civil order "is not born, but made." It has no doubt its own distinctive nature and functions, but it is not self-originated; and what we want to know is, how it could originate. This question is not a historical one, as there was no *time* when social life began; but a question which can be answered by reference to *any* kind, or stage, of settled society, if we analyse carefully enough the elements of which it consists, and their relations to one another. What is required is a "deduction from human nature" of the necessity of the State. That is to say, what was there in man's nature which made the State with its regulation of conduct possible, desirable, necessary; and why does man alone of all animals, and of all objects, crave for, and achieve, such a 'civil' life?

This is the question to which Spinoza first devotes himself. And he does so, that he may lay deep in the heart of things those institutions and forms of life, which express and develop man's highest endeavours. This can be done only by showing that man's *Jus Naturae*—which we shall hereafter translate Natural Right—has the same root as the Natural Right of every other object. Each object and being expresses or displays God's power, or the power of Universal Nature, in a definite and determinate way and measure.

"It is certain that Nature, taken as a whole, has the highest right over all things in its power; that is to say, the Right of Nature extends as far as its power extends. For the power (*potentia*) of Nature is the very power of God, who has the highest right over all things. But, as the universal power of Nature as a whole is nothing but the power of all particular things taken together, it follows that each particular thing has the highest right to everything in its power, or that the *jus* of each extends just as far as its power extends" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). Nor is man in any wise exempt from this universal law of God—that the measure of a thing's right to, and in and over, the world is the *potentia* vested in it. "The power of natural objects by which they exist, and, consequently, by which they operate, can be no other than the eternal power of God itself. . . . And from this we easily understand what Natural Right is. For, as God has right over all things, and God's right is nothing but the very power of God in so far as this is considered as absolutely free, it follows that each natural object has as much right from Nature as it has

power for existing and operating ; seeing that the power of each natural object by which it exists and operates is none other than the very power of God, which is absolutely free. By Natural Right, therefore, I understand the laws, or rules, of Nature, according to which all things happen ; that is to say, the very power of Nature. Thus the Natural Right of Nature as a whole, and consequently of each particular thing, extends as far as its power. Consequently, whatever each man does according to the laws of his own Nature, he does with the highest Natural Right ; and he has as much right over Nature as he has power" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 2, §§ 2-4). This does not, for Spinoza, involve that the power of each object and being, because it is God's power, is therefore unlimited. It is necessarily limited, because each object is only a part of a whole order or system ; and each object has power at all, only in virtue of its place and relations in this system. Thus while "the power by which particular things, and, therefore, man preserves his being, is the very power of God or Nature" ; it is this power, "not in so far as it is infinite, but in so far as it can be explained through the actual essence of man. Thus the power of man, in so far as it is explained through his actual essence, is *part* of the infinite power of God or Nature, *i.e.* of God's essence" (Part 4, Prop. 4, Dem.).

A principle which thus applies universally cannot, of course, be a moral principle. If it is no less true of the tiger than of man, it is not the distinctive law of human conduct ; for no one holds that any finite being except man is subject to *moral* law. Spinoza not only admits the non-ethical character of this law of universal Nature or law of God, but lays stress on it. Nature regarded as a whole is not a moral order, or the source of moral laws for man. It may be, and is, a condition of the moral life ; but it is not designed for, or subordinated to, this end. The natural laws by which it works are no respecter of persons. The earthquake does not spare the good and swallow up the bad. The pestilence does its work on saint and sinner alike. "The fish have been determined by Nature to swim, and the big ones to devour the little ones ; and so the fish are in possession of the water, and the big ones devour the little ones, by the highest Natural Right" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). In doing so they don't act unnaturally, but in the true sense naturally ; *i.e.* according to the laws of their own peculiar existence. The serpent acts as God has determined it, and the cat when it plays with its victim obeys God's law for it ;

and the "dogs delight to bark and bite, for God hath made them so."

Spinoza lays stress on this truth, because he wants to place morality and politics on another foundation. And the view that some kinds of human conduct are natural and others unnatural, seemed to him the chief obstacle in his path. He regards this view as not only untrue, but also as making men content with sham-knowledge. To say that virtue is natural, and vice unnatural; or, that virtue is conforming to the laws either of Nature as a whole, or of man's own nature, while vice is a violation, or infringement, of them, is to say what is self-contradictory. And by saying so, you cut yourself off from understanding the nature, and the conditions, of both virtue and vice.

Admitting, as every one does, that no material object, or animal, ever does, or can, act contrary to the laws of universal Nature, or to the laws of its own existence; is the same not true of man? Are there no laws of human existence, as infallibly, necessarily, and universally observed by each, and every, man, as the law of gravity is by the stone, or the law of growth by the plant. Spinoza holds that there are. They are not the *same* laws or rules of existence as these, and cannot be, since each object and set of objects have their own peculiar activities and laws or ways of acting; but the laws of human existence are no less observed in each, and every, case, than are the laws of mechanics or mathematics. If it were not so, man would not be a natural object, or part of the world at all, but a chimaera; for what has no definite, settled, and regular ways of acting and reacting cannot find any place in a world of universal law and order. This point will come before us in another connection where it can be better developed.

But the use which Spinoza here makes of it is to show, that as all natural laws, alike in man and in every other object, are always kept, and never violated, therefore no moral standard of conduct can be derived from them. They furnish us with no reason for distinguishing between the bad man and the good, still less for giving a preference to the latter. The bad man acts in conformity with the laws of

his nature no less than the good. He who follows his greed, avarice, or hate, is no less obeying the rules of his existence than he who loves his neighbour as himself.

All this of course looks very alarming, and, lest the reader may take from it a false impression, not to be readily corrected afterwards, I shall interpolate here, that Spinoza does not regard this as the truth of human nature, but as the result that would follow if morality has no better basis than 'natural law.' That it has a much firmer basis he intends to show directly.

But at present he is intent on proving, that the Natural Right vested in each man is not a moral right or a civil right, though it may be the foundation of both. Hence, it furnishes no direct rule of life, and by it God does not lay down immediately any laws of conduct, but only laws of existence. Laws of conduct, *i.e.* of right and wrong, are equally divine, but they are a later product. Neither children, nor savages, are born with a sound moral sense, any more than they are born with sound Reason. Yet they *are* born human beings, and not cats, or dogs; and have therefore certain distinctive ways of living, and acting, and preserving themselves—laws which they never do, or can, violate. It is this state of existence which Spinoza understands by the *status naturalis*, or the *status Naturae*. And our next duty is to analyse it, and discover what it is, and is not.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE *STATUS NATURALIS* AND THE NATURAL MAN.

THE question, whether Spinoza conceived the State of Nature as an actual historical fact, need not much trouble us. When we see what he understood by it, it will be evident that that question is quite irrelevant to the discussion in which we are engaged. For he does not regard the State of Nature as an ante-social, but only as an ante-civil, condition of life. To find an ante-social condition, we should need to go outside of man altogether. Man is, from first to last, social, co-operative, dependent on others in a hundred ways. Even the barbarian, or the child, is by the laws of his existence inseparably bound up with others, for the supply of his physical wants, if for no higher end. These are laws of human existence of the same kind, and as inviolably observed, as the tiger's hunting instinct, or the bird's instinct of flight. To try to conceive a condition of human life in which there were no bonds uniting men, is to think away a *human* life altogether. That is certainly not the first stage of man's existence, nor a stage that is even imaginable.

But if the *status naturalis* is not pre-social, surely it is anti-social? No. Spinoza does not admit even this. The State of Nature is indeed, as Hobbes pictured it, a state of war, and not, as Locke with his halting logic afterwards called it, a "state of peace and good-will." But—and this is a thought which will reappear in other connections—a state of war is not anti-social. It is anti-civil, contrary to a settled and regular order of life, it makes certain forms of

sociality impossible, it suspends certain avocations, and abrogates or negates rights that would exist if the conditions were peaceful. But it does not make men less social, less dependent on one another, less afraid of one another, less eager for one another's aid. Man's sociality takes another form than it would do under a system of stable and well-observed laws; but it is not less intense. In some respects it is more intense, for none so realise their need of one another as companions-in-arms fighting for common ends. Indeed, even to fight *against* a man, is a proof of a common social nature in each, not only because a fight brings out the manhood of each of the combatants, but also because to fight against a man is, next to being his friend, the greatest honour you can pay him, and lastly, because men fight in order thereby to establish certain social relations which appeal to them as better than those already existing. The victor who makes the vanquished his slave does not act anti-socially, but only substitutes one form of social life for another. The conquering Romans did not extinguish social ties among the peoples they subdued, but only changed the basis and form of these ties.

Spinoza then has no sympathy with the view that war is contrary to Nature, either universal Nature or human nature, or contrary to God's will. If it were thus contrary, it would be, not bad or troublesome—which it is—but impossible, as impossible for man as it is for the sun and the moon. Not only is it not contrary to nature; it is nature which prompts it, gives men the means to wage it, and awards their respective prizes to the winners and the losers. War has its place and function in man's life. There is a *Jus Belli* as well as a *Jus Pacis*. No government, however strong, can abolish this background of human existence. For here is a 'right' mightier than any State's laws. Civil laws stand only while, and in so far as, they take away the reasons for war. Oppressive rule brings its own nemesis in this form. And the state of war, while it is a very uncomfortable state, is more comfortable than some states of peace. Nay, war is, in the last resort, the weapon by which man's divine nature as necessarily social takes revenge upon all

human institutions, and officials, that, not recognising *for what* they exist, would do it outrage.

Thus while the *status naturalis* is a state of war, it is still a social state of life. But it is the first and lowest form of social life, because it embodies as yet no fixed and definite order of conduct, no laws, or settled customs, or habits of action, no rule of what *ought* and ought not to be done, and no force—even if there were a rule—to make any particular kind of conduct more desirable for men than the opposite. Spinoza's point is, Suppose a condition of Society in which there was no State, and no outward law, or social expectation, with force behind it, what then? He makes this supposition, in order to bring out the advantages which man owes to a Civil order of existence, or (putting it negatively) the needs and necessities which drive him on to create and maintain such an order. We cannot understand how divine is the function which this highest of all instruments fulfils in our life, until we try to think out what human existence would be without it. Every other sort of creature in the world has to live out its term of being without it, for none of them has been endowed with the *power* to devise and uphold such a common system of law. They love and fight, are treacherous or lustful, live as they please and die when a stronger pleases, without any power higher than their own to appeal to for defence, or for retribution. Now suppose, as nearly as we can, that man also were thus placed, endowed with higher powers than any animal, and with social instincts which would make certain forms of relationship with his fellows, whether they were friends or foes, inevitable to him; but with no law to bind him from without, no organised force to prevent his or others' aggression, no rule of conduct other than his own sweet will, and the less sweet will of others. What would be the result? This is what Spinoza calls the State of Nature, and it is the dark background upon which he shows up the necessity and excellence of a Civil Order. Or, to put it more truly, it is the raw material out of which things 'fair and good' are to come through human discipline and travail and pain, by divine wisdom working in man for

the conquest of passion, and its utilisation for higher ends.

Spinoza's use of the phrases "State of Nature" and "Natural Man" is much more coloured by St. Paul's use of the terms than by Hobbes'. "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural." "By the law is the knowledge of sin." "Where there is no law there is no transgression." "Sin is not imputed where there is no law." "The law entered, that the offence might abound." "I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." These and similar expressions in the New Testament are the atmosphere of Spinoza's thought in his discussion of man's state *by nature*, as contrasted with his state in an organised community, in which alone his spiritual powers can find realisation. The natural man is he who has not yet awakened to the consciousness of a law of conduct binding upon all; and the State of Nature is the condition in which there is no such law binding on all within the society. We might call it the state of natural individualism, if we add that each individual is at the same time social, but just as much or as little social as he pleases, or—what would be more correct—social in whatever ways he thinks best for himself.

These considerations may explain why Spinoza proceeds to sketch a picture of man's state by nature, which may pass for a page from Dante's *Inferno*.

"It is clear that in the state of nature there is no sin; or, if any one sins, he sins not against another, but against himself. For no one is bound by the *Jus Naturae* to obey another, unless he likes; nor to hold anything as good or bad, except what he himself decides according to his own humour to be good or bad. And nothing—to put it in a word,—is forbidden by the *Jus Naturae*, except that which is out of one's power. But a sin is an action which cannot be lawfully (*jure*) done. Now, if men were bound by an ordinance of Nature to be led by Reason, all would necessarily be led by Reason. For the ordinances of Nature

are God's ordinances, which God has established with the same freedom with which he exists. Thus these follow from the necessity of the divine nature, and consequently are eternal, and cannot be violated. Men, however, are led for the most part by inclination (*appetitus*), rather than by Reason ; and yet they do not disturb the order of Nature, but necessarily follow it. Accordingly, the ignorant man, and the man of weak spirit, is no more bound by the *Jus Naturae* to arrange his life wisely than the sick man is bound to have a healthy body" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 2, § 18). Elsewhere (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16) it is thus expressed. "In respect of *Jus Naturae* I do not acknowledge any difference between men and the other particular things in Nature, nor between the men endowed with Reason and those who are ignorant of true Reason ; nor between fools, madmen, and sane men. For whatever each thing does according to the laws of its own nature, it does with the highest right ; because, that is to say, it acts as it has been determined by Nature and cannot do otherwise. Wherefore, as long as men are considered to be living under the reign of Nature alone, it is not only he who directs his life in accordance with the laws of Reason, who lives with the highest right ; but also he who, not yet knowing Reason, or not yet having a virtuous character, lives in accordance with the laws of natural inclination alone. That is to say, as the wise man has the highest right to all things which Reason prescribes, or to live according to the laws of Reason, so also the ignorant man, or the man of weak soul, has the highest right to all things to which natural inclination prompts him, or to live according to the laws of inclination. And this is the same as the teaching of Paul, who recognises no sin prior to the existence of law ; that is to say, as long as men are considered to be living according to the rule (*imperium*) of Nature. Thus the *Jus Naturale* of each man is determined not by sound Reason, but by desire (*cupiditas*) and power (*potentia*). For all have not been naturally determined to act in accordance with the laws and rules of Reason ; on the contrary, all men are born ignorant of everything, and before they can know the true principle of conduct and acquire a virtuous character, a great part of their existence, even if they have enjoyed a good education, has already passed ; and, in the meantime, they are none the less bound to live and to preserve themselves as far as they can ; that is to say, they are bound to do so, solely from the impulse of natural inclination." In the same way, in the *Ethics*, speaking of the distinction between the *status naturalis* and the *status civilis*, Spinoza says (Part 4, Prop. 37) : "Each man exists with the highest Natural Right, and, consequently, each does with the highest natural right those things which follow from the necessity of his own nature ; and so it is by the highest Natural Right that each man judges what is good and what is bad, and looks to his own interest, according to his own view, and acts as his own avenger, and endeavours to preserve that which he loves, and to destroy that which he hates."

"Whatever there is in the nature of things which we judge to be bad, or to be likely to prevent us existing and enjoying a rational life, that it is lawful for us to remove from our path in what seems to us the safest way. . . . And to speak generally, it is lawful for each man by the highest *Jus Naturae* to do whatever he judges to contribute to his welfare" (*Ibid.*, Part 4, App., § 8).

Thus, Natural Right is not to be defined in terms of morality, or even of Reason. We do not so define it in the case of any object or of any animal. And man is, to begin with, no more wise, or rather he is less wise, than the young of many of the animals. His powers are so limited, and his weaknesses so numerous, that for many years after his birth, he would at once succumb, if his fate were in his own hands. He is not rational, and yet he is human. Now,

"if human nature had been so fashioned, that men lived solely according to the prescript of Reason, and did not seek anything else, then the *Jus Naturae*, in so far as it is considered as belonging to the human race, would be determined solely by the power of Reason. But men are led rather by blind desire than by Reason; and accordingly the natural power (*potentia*), or *jus*, of men must be defined, not in terms of Reason, but by whatever inclination determines them to action, and to endeavour to preserve themselves. I admit, indeed, that those desires which do not spring from Reason, are not so much human actions (activities) as human passions (passivities). But because we are treating here of the general power or *jus* of Nature, we can *here* recognise no difference between the desires which are begotten in us by Reason, and those which arise in us from other causes", (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 2, § 5). "Each man always endeavours, as much as in him is, to preserve his being; and, as each man has as much right as he has power, whatever each man, whether he be wise or ignorant, attempts and does, that he attempts and does by the highest right of Nature. It follows from this that the *Jus et Institutum Naturae* under which all men are born, and for the most part live, forbids nothing save that which no one desires, and which is in no one's power: not strife, nor hatred, nor anger, nor guile, nor, in a word, is it contrary to anything which natural inclination prompts" (*Ibid.*, § 8). "Suppose a robber to force me to promise that I will give up my goods to him whenever he wishes them. Now since, as I have shown, my *jus naturale* is determined by my power alone, it is certain that if I can free myself from this robber by deceit, viz. by promising him whatever he wants, it is lawful for me by *Jus Naturae* to do so; that is to say, to promise deceitfully whatever he wishes. Or suppose, that I have made a *bona-fide* promise to some one, that for the space of 20 days I will not taste food or take

any nourishment ; and that I afterwards discover that I have made a foolish promise, and cannot keep it without the utmost loss. As, by the *Jus Naturale*, I am bound to choose the lesser of two evils, I can, therefore, refuse to stand to such a compact, and take back my plighted word. This, I say, is lawful *Jure Naturali*, whether true and certain reasoning convince me that I have made an unfortunate promise, or whether I merely *think* I have done so. For, whether I see the matter truly or falsely, I will fear the greatest evil, and will, *ex Naturae instituto*, seek in every way to escape it" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). "A promise made to anyone, by which a man has promised in words only, that he will do this or that, which his *jus* made it possible for him to do or to leave undone, is valid and binding only so long as the will of him who made the promise is not changed. For he who has the power of breaking his promise, has not really given up his right, but has given only words. If then, he who is by Natural Right a law unto himself, has come to the conclusion, whether he have good grounds for the conclusion or not (for to err is human), that from the promise he has made, more loss than advantage will accrue to him, he also thinks from the judgment of his own mind that his promise should be broken, and by the *Jus Naturae* will break it" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 2, § 12). "The *Jus Naturale* of each man extends as far as the desire and power (*cupiditas et potentia*) of each ; and no one is by the *Jus Naturae* bound to live according to another's mind, but each is the vindicator of his own freedom" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Pref.).

These passages are at first sight somewhat startling ; but, if read in the connection in which Spinoza places them, their meaning and force will be clear enough. What he is considering is the *Jus Naturale* which belongs to each man, the things of which he is capable. He is capable of envy, hate, malice, guile, lust, as well as of the corresponding virtues. Nay more, he alone is capable of these in the peculiar forms they assume in human existence. An elephant is not wise as man is wise ; nor the fox cunning as he is. If then we want to know what man can and cannot achieve we must take account of both the negative and the positive sides of his being.

That this is not the end, or the whole truth, of the matter, Spinoza is well aware. He lays stress on it just for that reason, that in our haste to get to morals, Civil Society, and Religion, we do not properly recognise the 'natural basis' of all of them. If man had not these passions, anti-social as well as social, there would be neither morality, nor religion, nor the State. And instead of despising them because they

are only 'natural' and not spiritual, we must learn to find the spiritual in them ; otherwise, we shall not find it at all.

That the *Jus Naturae* and the State of Nature have, thus far, given us no religion, or morality, or law of conduct, or education, or art, or science, is undoubtedly true ; but the reason is that at the moment we are looking at the 'powers' which God has given man to *become* moral, religious, cultured, civilised—powers which he alone is dowered with. And these 'powers' are not, as yet, in a form adequate to them. They have not found themselves or their work.

Spinoza not only assumes this tacitly in the passages we have quoted, but points it out explicitly more than once. "In order," he tells us (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16)

"that we may discover what freedom can be conceded in the best State, we must discuss the basis of the State, and shall consider first the *Jus Naturale* of each man, *not yet taking any account of the State and of Religion.*" And in answer to the objection, "that it is flagrantly contrary to the Law divinely revealed, to assert that everyone who has not the use of Reason lives, in the State of Nature, according to the laws of natural inclination, with the highest Natural Right. For as all alike are absolutely bound (whether they have the use of Reason or not), in accordance with the divine Law, to love their neighbours as themselves, no one can, without wrongdoing, do harm to another, and live according to the laws of inclination alone"; Spinoza replies: "The answer to this is easy, if we are having regard to the *status naturalis* alone, for this *status* is, both by nature and in time, prior to religion. No one knows *ex Natura*, that he is bound to obey God. He can attain to this knowledge only through a Revelation confirmed by signs. Thus, prior to Revelation, no one is bound by a *jus divinum* of which he cannot help being ignorant. The *status naturalis* should therefore be carefully distinguished from the *status religionis*, and must be conceived as without religion, and law (*lex*), and consequently without sin, and wrongdoing,—as we have just pictured it, and confirmed our view by the authority of St. Paul" (*Ibid.*).

Thus, in this condition of human existence each would do, as in the days when there was no King in Israel, what was right in his own eyes, and no one could blame him. Where there is no law, and no constituted authority, there can be neither justice nor injustice, neither property nor theft, neither right conduct nor wrong, neither obedience nor disobedience ; but all that is possible is lawful, and that only is unlawful which is not in one's power.

The miseries of this condition of 'unlicensed freedom' are evident enough. Each of them is a reason for escaping from such a condition. But to understand the *necessity* of this escape, and the precise *way* in which it could alone be effected, we must find out what God has, and no less what he has not, done for man, or put within man's power.

CHAPTER XIV.

GOD'S LAWS AND HUMAN LAWS.

THE title of this chapter is not a logical division. For all laws are *ultimately*, to Spinoza, God's, whether they regulate the stars in their courses or the passions of men. But he makes use of the distinction because it is suggestive, and still more because it is effective in correcting a prevailing error. And he holds further, that there is a real distinction hinted at, and conveyable by, the phrase, for the sake of which it is worth keeping the phrase, even though it is not an exact expression of the truth. He prefers to talk of God's laws and man's laws, because this expression does, on the whole, convey *more* truth to the mind of a reader than a more cumbrous expression of the idea would,—in the same spirit as the astronomer prefers to speak of the rising and setting of the sun, though that is only popular language. Neither phrase is misleading, if we once grasp the truth hinted at by it.

What, then, is the real nature of the distinction? We may put it popularly in this way. Human laws are all those which depend for their existence and maintenance on human thought and will; while all other laws are God's. Or, to express it with scientific accuracy, Human laws are all those which God has given man the power to devise and to sustain in the interest of his own welfare; while all other laws, though also divine, exist and maintain themselves without man thinking, or willing them. "Human laws and laws of Nature" would in some respects be a preferable phrasing; but in other respects it is misleading. *Jus*

Naturale and *Jus Civile* is an alternative way of indicating the contrast which Spinoza sometimes makes use of.

But, without spending time over terms, let us analyse the real distinction, and discover its consequences. Spinoza's position seems at first sight self-destructive. For he holds, on the one hand, that man has no more power than any material object to violate any of the laws of his existence—those laws by which he exists and operates; for these are God's laws for him, and God's laws always involve eternal truth and necessity, and are inviolably observed. This seems to carry with it the consequence that the bad, as well as the good, act according to the laws of their nature, that is, according to the laws which God has laid down for them, and are therefore, in so acting, not disobeying God, but fulfilling his will. This conclusion, as well as the principle from which it comes, Spinoza fully accepts. Yet, on the other hand, he holds with equal firmness, that each man can be good or bad; that, if he is bad, he may justly be punished; that moral laws are equally binding on all men; and that the State has a right to force men to observe its laws, if they do not will to do so, and that in so forcing them, it is acting as God's vicegerent on earth. Is there not a patent self-contradiction here?

There is a patent one, but it disappears if we follow out Spinoza's line of thought; and in place of it, there appears one of his most striking principles—that God is not a law-giver, and yet that it is by him that 'kings reign and princes decree justice.' Let us see how he reaches this conclusion.

The word 'law' (*lex*), he tells us (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 4), "signifies, in general, that according to which all particular things, either all, or some of the same species, act in one and the same definite and determinate way. And this depends, either on the necessity of nature or on a resolution (*placitum*) of men. A law which depends on a necessity of nature is to be understood as that which follows necessarily from the very nature, or definition, of the thing; while that law which depends on a prescription of men, and which is more properly called *Jus*, is such as men prescribe for themselves, and for others, to the end that they may spend their lives in greater security, and to greater advantage, or for other reasons. For example, as an instance of the first kind of law. All

bodies when they impinge upon other smaller ones, lose so much of their motion as they communicate to the others. This is a law which holds good universally of all bodies, and one which follows by natural necessity. Similarly, that a man when he remembers one thing, straightway recalls another thing like it, or one that he had perceived along with it, is a law (*lex*) which follows of necessity from human nature. But on the other hand, that men yield up, or are compelled to yield up, their right (*jus*) which they have by nature, and bind themselves to a certain rule of conduct (*ratio vivendi*) depends on human resolution."

"I say that *these* laws depend on human resolution, although I quite admit that all things are determined, in accordance with universal laws of Nature, to exist and operate in a definite and determinate way. For these reasons: (1) Because man, in so far as he is a part of Nature, constitutes to this extent a part of the power of Nature. . . . (2) Because we must define and explain things through their proximate causes. The *general* consideration that all causes work necessarily, and in a connected way, can be of very little use to us for forming and ordering our thoughts about particular objects. Moreover, as we know very little about the co-ordination and concatenation of things, that is to say how things are really ordered and related to one another; it is better, nay it is a necessity, for practical purposes (*ad usum vitae*) to consider things as possible."

Spinoza further points out that the original meaning of law (*lex*) was a command (*jus* or *mandatum*), which one man might lay down for another. Such a command was necessarily an abridgment of the man's freedom of action within narrower limits than those which nature as a system, or his own human nature as part of that system, had set for him. But such a command, be it noted, was not compulsion. It might, or might not, be observed. And further, such a law might be suspended or superseded. These ideas, derived from humanly-devised and imposed laws, have been by the popular mind (Spinoza is speaking of his own day) carried over along with the name (*lex*), and been regarded as holding good of nature in all her phases. A natural law has been conceived as a limit upon a thing's action, as sometimes observed and sometimes violated—as when men speak of 'sins of nature,'—and as capable of being abrogated for a time, or abolished altogether, if the divine law-giver so wills.

As against this, Spinoza argues—as men of science were very slow to admit, and the popular mind does not yet

admit—that what is true of a human law is not true of the divine laws inscribed on natural objects and on human nature. On the contrary, as these are the only modes in which God reveals himself, and the basis on the security of which the whole of man's life and destiny, his knowledge and his action depend, any violation of them (except that which our ignorance is content to call such) would shatter forever our faith in God. "The universal laws of Nature are simply the decrees of God, which follow from the necessity and the perfection of the divine nature. If anything, therefore, should happen in Nature, which was inconsistent with these universal laws, it would, of necessity, be contrary also to the divine decree and intelligence and nature; or, if any one should hold that God does anything contrary to the laws of Nature, he would at the same time be also forced to hold that God acts contrary to his own nature, than which there is no greater absurdity."

Thus, all God's laws which work through anything but human thought and desire—and we might even leave out the exceptions, as we shall see later—are inviolably observed. They partake of the nature of God himself, being in fact his decrees, or his nature as revealed. They are, therefore, characterised by "eternal necessity and truth," as he is. And the providence of God is just the stable order of the universe in which Reason can find itself more and more at home, and fashion out of its materials new instruments of progress and happiness.

"The crowd think that God does nothing, so long as he acts by the usual order of Nature; and on the other hand, that the power of Nature, and natural causes, are suspended, while God is acting. In this way, they imagine two powers numerically distinct from one another, viz. the power of God and the power of natural objects" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 6). "By the providence of God (*directio Dei*), I understand the fixed and immutable order of Nature, or the 'concatenation' of natural things; for the universal laws of nature in accordance with which all things take place, and are determined, are nothing save God's eternal decrees, which always involve eternal truth and necessity. Whether, therefore, we say that all things take place in accordance with the laws of Nature, or that they are ordered according to God's decree and guidance, we are saying the same thing" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 3).

If then there are laws, divine laws, regulating, controlling, and determining the existence and operation of all things and beings in the world *except* man, can we really hope to make him, and keep him, thus exceptional? Is his uniqueness such that he can stand free when all else is "bound in chains of universal law?" Almost alone among great thinkers Spinoza answers, No. Hume has given the same answer; but Hume is the disciple who said with unnecessarily strong language, "I know not the man"; and so, in this connection, he does not count. Spinoza maintains, as I indicated in an earlier part of this book, that we may not set man free from that universality of law which governs all things that have any existence. We cannot *afford* to do this; and we have it not in our power, if we would. We cannot *afford* to do it, for to set man free from law would be to sever him from the world, and to sever him from God; and this would be, not freedom, but impotence, nay annihilation. And we have it not in our power, for our very thoughts are God's thoughts in us. "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there."

Nor are the laws in accordance with which man "is determined to exist and to operate" simply those universal laws, such as the law of gravity, which hold good of every material object, and therefore of man in so far as he has, or is, a bodily organism. Spiritual activities are no less regulated and determined. Thought, desire, action, are, equally with the fall of the stone or the growth of the tree, subject to a definite relation of cause and effect from which they can no more escape than the stone can attempt to fly. Men imagine they can be good or bad, happy or unhappy, wise or unwise, humane or cruel, simply by an act of will. No delusion could be more dangerous. These things are not at each moment simply at our option. "It is not in a man's power to be at any time at the highest point of human freedom." We are what we are, in virtue of definite causes which dispose us to think, feel, desire in certain ways, and not in others. We

cannot think true thoughts, simply by willing, or wishing, to do so. We cannot desire, or attain, the true good of life simply by 'making up our minds' to do so.

Spinoza nowhere says,—this I affirm without any hesitation—or even implies, that the laws which determine these spiritual activities are the same laws as those which govern the motions of the stars, or the germinating of the seed. They are the same only in the sense that all of them are God's laws; and, as a consequence therefrom, all of them are necessarily, inviolably, and universally observed within the sphere of existence to which they apply. The law of thought is not violated though the tree does not think, nor the law of gravity by a man going up in a balloon. Thought is not limited by extension, nor extension by thought; but one thought is relative to another thought, and one extended object to another.

This will be clearer, if we note that Spinoza always regards the laws which govern the existence and activities of a thing, not as limits upon the freedom of that object, but as the 'powers,' the *virtus*, which it enjoys in, and through, the universe to which it belongs. In a sense, you may say they are limitations. For all determination to be this, that is to say, to exist and act in certain ways, is at the same time a negation, a determination *not* to be something else, or to be unable to exist and act in *other* ways. If the object is a flower, it has its own laws of existence, and these limit it, in the sense, that if it is a flower it cannot be also the sun that warms it, and the moisture that nourishes it. But this is no real limitation of the thing itself. The absence of this "definite and determinate mode of existence" would alone be a real limitation. The only object which is quite free to be anything, and to do anything, is what cannot be conceived, the 'pure being which is pure nothing.' The laws of a thing's existence are its life, its freedom, its power to use the world, and to serve the world. Within these 'limits' the whole universe is at its back, beyond them it is nothing, and can accomplish nothing.

The same is true of man. The laws of his existence are just his definite and determinate mode of existence itself.

This is *his* freedom, power, place in the world, God's best and only gift to him. If God had inscribed no laws on his nature, on his understanding and his desire, laws which he may not and cannot break, he would be weak and poor just where everything else in the world is strong and productive. That God has done so, needs no proof. For whatever exists, can exist only in a determinate way, and a determinate way of existing and acting is just what we mean by a 'law.' < That man is no less subject than other things to lines or ways of existing and operating, that is, to laws, is simply another way of saying, that God has given him a definite nature, capacities, energies, modes of affecting and of being affected, which have been bestowed on nothing else in the world, and that out of these 'limits' or 'privileges' (whichever you prefer to name them) he never can escape.

It is a corollary from this, that the 'laws' of each thing's existence are not something imposed upon it from without, but simply the nature of the thing taken—as we must take it, since "it can neither be nor be conceived" otherwise, or, in Spinoza's phrase, "apart from God or Nature"—in relation to all other things. Science is, I think, responsible for giving a kind of artificial and hollow majesty to 'laws of Nature,' by treating them as if they had some sort of omnipotent power to make recalcitrant material bend to their will. Really they have no such power; their only majesty is that objects are so constituted that they always 'like' to act in certain ways and not in others, or to 'behave' in this manner and not in that under certain conditions. The pencil which falls on the table is not impelled by the force of gravity, but simply by its own force, which it enjoys as *part* of an ordered and connected order. And in its fall it solves a hundred problems which all the sciences taken together could not solve. It is its nature, or that of the world working in and through it, to do this; while it is not man's nature to attain the same result so easily, either in the problems of his own life, or in those which the pencil's fall arouses in his mind. His nature, or the laws of his existence are different, not in being less necessary, but in being the revelation of other ways

of "affecting and being affected by" objects and beings outside of him.

There are, then, laws of human nature as well as of physical nature, limits within which alone man can exist and energise. These constitute him a man, and not a monkey, or a mountain. They *prevent* him, if you like to say so, from becoming either of these, and from acting as they act; but on the other hand they *enable* him to act and live as only a man can, and to do "all that may become a man." They are God's laws for him, the bounds within which his misery and his happiness alike lie. Thus "whatever human nature, from its own power alone, can furnish for the conservation of its own existence, we rightly call the internal help of God; while whatever accrues to man's advantage from the power of causes external to him, we properly name the outward help of God" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 3).

What, then, are those divine laws of human nature? Negatively put, they are not *moral* laws, and they do not enable us to distinguish between good men and bad. They are present in, and always observed by, both alike. The virtuous man does not keep them any better than the vicious. For they are the conditions of a human existence in any and every form, the limits which God hath ordained that even the most godless and reckless cannot overpass. They are the "eternal truth" of human nature, which prevents the criminal from being an outcast and the good man from being a prig.

Spinoza holds strongly that God has not given men moral rules or laws, which they may, or may not, observe. How could men fail to keep them, if God had willed that they should be kept. The fact that moral laws, like state laws, are violated by men as they please, is, he holds, of itself sufficient proof that God did not, and did not will to, give man morality in this form. Indeed, if man were to be born moral, or with the moral law written on his heart, he would have had to be a different being from the one we know. Morality is indeed God's gift to man; but God willed that he should not have it, without the struggle and effort and thought which go to constitute it. Man has it on these terms, and

not otherwise. He is not born, either as an individual or as a race, moral or religious or civil or even rational ; but born only with strong passions which, because they are *human* passions from the first, have in them the power of unfolding into the rich and varied life of morality and science, art, religion, and the State. All this is man's work, and his alone, the growth in perfection or toward perfectness, which is the deepest law of his being. It is not man's work as compared with God's work, for it is the most divine thing in the world, and the divine impulse which God has implanted in man brings it into existence. But it is man's work, both in the sense that nothing else but man is capable of this, and also in the sense that nothing of it is *given* to man, for by its very nature it cannot be given. He has to grope after it, aspire, think wisely or foolishly, but yet to think, fail, succeed, create moral laws, fashion States and institutions of life, and find or lose his happiness as best he can. God does not leave him alone, for all this is the very life of God in him, working for human happiness ; but God does save him, or will his salvation, in no other way than this. Men cannot be made happy, or blessed, except through the process of their own self-unfolding and self-endeavour. It is but the thought of St. Paul, to which Spinoza has given a wider reach, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

God, therefore, does not stand to men in the relation of a prince, king, legislator, or judge. These are relations borrowed from a civil society, and are only useful popular anthropomorphisms for suggesting religious truth or enforcing obedience to moral rules. And, for the same reason, God is not, strictly speaking, just, merciful, jealous, repentant, angry, pleased, patient, etc. These are "attributes of human nature alone, and should not be ascribed to the divine nature" (see *Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 4). God is greater than any of these, for it is through him that they all are ; his intelligence, or thought, is not limited as human intelligence is, nor his will inconstant and thwarted by outward forces.

"It is only popular thought and limited knowledge which describe God as a legislator, or Prince, and call him just, merciful, etc. In reality, God acts and directs all things solely from the necessity of his own nature and perfection ; and his decrees and volitions are eternal truths, and always involve necessity" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 4). "The divine teachings, whether they have been revealed by the light of nature or by that of prophecy, do not receive the force of a command, or imperative (*mandatum*), immediately from God ; but necessarily from those, or by the mediation of those, who have the right of commanding (*jus imperandi*) and of issuing decrees. And so, we cannot conceive of God as reigning over men, and directing human affairs in accordance with Justice and Equity, except through the medium of these civil rulers. This is confirmed also by experience. For no traces of divine justice are found except where just men rule. Everywhere else we see the same chance happen to the just as to the unjust, to the pure as to the impure. A state of matters which has caused many, who thought that God reigned immediately over men, and directed the whole of Nature for their benefit, to doubt of a divine providence altogether" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 19).

That is to say, God's only way of ruling men in, and making them obedient to, righteousness, justice, and love, is by enabling them, and prompting them, to establish *for themselves* such conditions of life and such regulations of conduct as will more and more render a harmonious and strenuous existence possible to, and desired by, each of them. All the problems (and all the solutions of these problems) of morals, religion, art, science, social order, political organisation, fall within the compass of human nature, of its thought and desire, of its will and purpose. These things cannot be given to man, or imposed upon him from without. He has to create them out of the raw material of which the savage and the child are examples. He creates them, indeed, only in virtue of God's revelation, or expression, of himself in human nature,—in this raw material of desire and thought, and in the impulse toward more and more complete thought, and more perfect social harmony, which is the *conatus sese conservandi*, or God's law for him ; but they are none the less made by man's nature alone. If *he* does not think them, will them, sustain and enforce them, they will be found nowhere else. If he thinks, or desires, or plans badly, he will have the reward (which we for some reason call a punishment) of his own

deeds ; and this will be divine justice overtaking him, for such a result is a necessary and infallible result of those laws of human nature which have made him a man and not a clod, or the inevitable result of such a nature as God has given to *every* man. \hookleftarrow To show just this, viz. that God's supreme law for man is, that all that he does, thinks, desires, and chooses, shall return upon and into himself, that he has his moral happiness and religious and social fate in his own hands, that the result of moral and of immoral action, of love and of hate, is no less inevitable, and no less well-defined in character, than the fall of the stone or the course of the stream—though the two sets of laws operate in quite different ways, or constitute quite different natures,—this is, perhaps, Spinoza's greatest ethical idea. This does not mean that man's fate and happiness are not in God's hands ; but it does mean (1) that God, by constituting him a being whose desires are always thoughts (more or less adequate), has given him the power to be blessed or wretched as no other creature can be ; and (2) that his blessedness and wretchedness follow necessarily, that is in accordance with the laws of his own peculiar nature, from the things he does and thinks and desires.

Thus, there is in man something deeper than, "prior in nature as well as in time" to the distinction of virtue and vice, something which underreaches and includes that distinction as well as all other distinctions between one kind, or class, of men, and another. A bad man is still a man—in spite of the Stoics. A criminal who recognises no human law is still 'under law to God,' obedient to laws which he *cannot* break. A Nero is still human, though we should like to be able to think him an inhuman monster. And the Conqueror of all the known worlds is still a creature of flesh and blood, dependent for life and food and knowledge on the meanest of his slaves and the meanest object in nature. Each still thinks, desires, loves, hates, fears, and hopes, as nothing that is not human can do. In this community of nature men stand. It is their weakness. It is also their strength. It is their blessedness. It is their punishment. It is God's law for them, the condition of their

being at all. That men may think more or less truly, that they may live more or less wisely, that they may love and hate different objects and in differing degrees,—all these are distinctions within, or on the basis of, this fundamental one,—that they all have the *power* of thinking, living, loving, hating, and an inherent, imperious, necessity driving them on to such self-expression. God's laws *given* to man are neither laws of virtue nor of vice, neither a determination to the good life nor to the bad life ; but the conditions of a human existence in *any* form, the conditions out of which, and on the basis of which alone, either goodness or badness is possible.

This enables us to understand two somewhat enigmatic utterances to which Spinoza gives expression. The first is that in which he tells us (Part 4, Prop. 37, Schol. II.) that "the just and the unjust, wrong-doing and desert, are *extrinsic* notions, and not attributes which express the nature of the Mind." Or, as he puts it elsewhere (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 4), the laws of conduct which men prescribe for themselves and for others, and which they may or may not observe, "these, I say, depend for their sanction on the resolution (*placitum*) of men ; and I say so because though they depend on the power of the human mind, they do so in such wise that the human mind, in so far as it apprehends things under the category of the true and the false, can none the less be most clearly conceived without these laws, but cannot be conceived at all without necessary law as we have just defined it." These statements are clear enough, and fall into line with what we have been saying. < Justice and Injustice, Goodness and Badness, transgression and merit, property and injury, obedience and disobedience, the lawful and the unlawful, duty and punishment, are all distinctions that fall within, and are the outgrowth of, certain distinctive powers, or energies, or laws of existence, which God has worked into the texture of human nature. They are *kinds* of conduct, not that which alone renders every kind of conduct possible. They are distinctions which, as we shall see, arise *necessarily* out of human thought and will, but they do *arise*. They are the product of the human mind

working to conceive, and to carry out, what it presents to itself as an object of desire ; but they are not the first or the inviolable condition of a human existence in every form. As Spinoza somewhere says, an insane man, a fool, a man in a state of intoxication, a man transported with anger or with love (and, we may add, the poet in his phrenzy), are not amenable to moral law, or to civil law ; and yet they are men, men whose insanity, and folly, and drunkenness, and poetic madness never are other than peculiar to the human race. The drunk man is not a beast, though we insult the beasts by so naming him. The lunatic is still a man, a son of God, not lost to providence nor outcast from God's laws, though lost for the time to reason and civil life. And the divine madness, which Greek and Hebrew alike hailed as the god in man, and prized above all moral codes and legislative wisdom, as well as the religious prophetic transport which fears no penalty save unfaithfulness to its vision, these are, by their very nature, lifted above the fear of any human law and of the men who enforce it. Yet they are not inhuman. The one is the glory of our humanity, and the other is its shame.

Spinoza has another reason for calling Justice and Injustice, etc., 'extrinsic notions,' and for refusing to recognise them as the laws which constitute men human beings,—viz. that there is no universal agreement among men as to what they are. If these were laws imprinted by God, as definite commands and prohibitions, upon man's soul, they would be the same in all individuals and in all nations. This we do find in the case of human desires and emotions ; *they* are the same everywhere. Jealousy, anger, love, kindness, courage, cruelty, cowardice, hope, fear, and so on are characteristic of men of all races, peoples, and tongues. He who knows man's nature, and the passions which move him, finds under all moral systems and religious creeds, under the most varied customs and systems of political order, the same fundamental nature. Each nation has its own peculiar laws, and customs, and language, and dress ; but the same essential nature reveals itself in each. God, as he puts it, did not make nations but individuals.

The differences of national customs, and moral standards, and political systems have arisen from the differing circumstances in which bodies of men were placed, and the differing intellectual capacities of those who composed them; but not from any difference in the motives and passions, the goodness or the badness of the component members. Speaking of the causes of the unstable nature of the Hebrew Political Order, Spinoza (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 17) says,

"What were the causes why the Hebrews so often fell away from the Law; why were they so often subdued; and why at length was their political existence entirely extinguished? Some one will, perhaps, answer that it was all due to the rebelliousness of the people. But this is a puerile explanation. For why was this nation more rebellious than other nations? Was it from Nature? Nature surely does not create nations but individuals. What distinguishes them into nations is simply difference of language, laws, and common customs. And only the two last, viz. laws and customs, can bring it about, that each nation has a peculiar genius, a peculiar place in the world, and lastly peculiar prejudices. If then, it had to be admitted that the Hebrews were more contumacious than the rest of mortals, that would have to be imputed to a defect in their laws or common customs. And indeed it is true, that if God had willed their political organisation to last longer, he would also have established for them other commands and laws, and another sort of administration."

That is to say, the laws of the civil and the moral order are peculiar to each nation or tribe, created by it, and in turn creating it, giving it its distinctive work, and place, and value in the world. These are divine; and they can be truly called God's commands, if you remember that they are his commands only as unfolding themselves through the will or passions of the people, or through the wisdom or imaginative insight of a great man; and that they are thus always accommodated, or adapted, to the particular circumstances of that people. The Hebrews, as Spinoza puts it, with that Eastern indifference to all middle causes, which made them ascribe everything directly to God, calling the thunder his voice, the clouds his messengers, the high trees sons of God, the giants (in spite of their bad character) sons of God; also called all wise men, and men of vivid imagination and poetic fire, prophets or seers. A great

statesman like Moses was to them God's lawgiver. Nothing, and especially nothing unusual, happened to them, which was not directly God's work. And all this is true, when conceived as the Eastern mind conceived it. Man's wisdom comes from God. A people's laws *are* God's laws for it. A prophet is God's messenger and speaks with God's authority. All nature is his voice, for he is the life and soul of all that is.

But, with our Western insularity, we have taken poetry and made it prose, taken religion and made it theology, taken a truth and made it a lie. We now speak of God's wisdom *and* man's wisdom, of what God does for us *and* of what we do for ourselves, of where God's help *comes in*, of Nature *and* God, of the wind *and* how God tempers it, of man violating or keeping God's laws as he pleases, of doing our duty by God, of giving one day in seven to God, etc. This whole attitude of spirit Spinoza regards as not only irreligious and profane, but as an utter misreading of the religion of his race, and of God's message to them. Moses' wise and great legislation was just God's wisdom in him. Isaiah's message to the people *was* God's fire in him. The Hebrews saw that a man's wisdom is not his own, but God's; that all 'vision' is from the Lord; that the prophet and the sweet singer as well as the winds and the waves and the locusts are his messengers. There is no doubt a distinction between the way in which one thing comes to us, and that in which we gain another. A moral or political principle of conduct is not, cannot be, given us in the way in which the rain and the summer-heat are. But the distinction is not, that in the former case we do something for ourselves, while in the latter God does something for us. All the difference Spinoza will admit, is a difference in God's way of revealing himself to us and caring for us. The one is the inner help or providence of God, working as human thought and desire—the most perfect and real working the world presents to us—while the other is the outer help or providence of God. There is nothing which is ours, or Nature's, and *not* his. All phrases which imply this, such as 'merely human wisdom,' the depreciation of

Reason, "God's greatest gift and the divine light in man" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 15), the contrast between revealed religion and other kinds of religion (as if, says Spinoza, all religion were not revealed by God to man), the contrast between virtuous character and soundness in the faith, between the State as a secular, irreligious institution 'which neither fears God nor regards man' and the Church which is God's peculiar dwelling-place, between the products of human genius and skill and the inspiration of God in man,—all these phrases, and many more, are to him a proof that, strong though the Western mind is in other directions, it has no *genius* for religion. It has not only taken all its religion from the East, but it has so changed what it has taken, that those to whom first it was a vision and an ecstasy, would hardly recognise it in its new dress. We save ourselves from being too religious by urging the claims of personality to some recognition. But the personality which we have apart from, or against God, can have no higher value than ignorance.

Spinoza's great principle then is, that there is nothing secular in the universe, nothing common or unclean, nothing that does not reveal and express God. And the application of this principle which concerns us here is, that all legislation, and legislator's wisdom, and the willingness and power of the people to obey and maintain civil and moral law, is from the Lord. Hence the peculiar nature of each political organisation which makes it 'fit' that particular nation as a well-made suit of clothes does a man, is as really a divine ordination of human affairs, as if God had given each nation a written code by direct gift. Nay, what he has done is more divine. The code 'fits' just because he has given men the power, and implanted within them the necessity, of thinking out, and willing, and enforcing those conditions of existence which, under their peculiar circumstances, seem best adapted for achieving *for them* a secure and harmonious common life.

This thesis Spinoza works out in relation to the Hebrew nation, with an unrivalled insight and wealth of illustration. We have no space, however, except to indicate the con-

clusions to which he comes. These are (1) that the laws of the Hebrews were God's laws for them, (2) that yet they were revealed only through the wisdom, human wisdom if you like, which God gave to Moses and the kings; or through the high imaginative gifts which he conferred on a few prophets and seers; (3) they were binding upon the people only because they had first covenanted with one another and with God, or with Moses as God's vicegerent, to live together on these terms; (4) they were, therefore, peculiar to the Hebrews, that is, they were the national and characteristic laws which were 'the good of,' or the security of a people so circumstanced, by past history, habits, and outward conditions. They are not binding on other nations, for whom such laws would not be God's laws, since they would not produce a secure and good life under quite different conditions. Moral rules and principles are indeed bound up with positive and ceremonial laws in the Hebrew code, and these *are* binding on all nations, but binding only for the same reason as made them binding upon the Hebrews, viz. because (and in so far as) upon such a basis alone will men live, and strive, and work in harmony; (5) the peculiar national laws and customs of other peoples are (according even to the testimony of Scripture) prescribed and instituted by God as well as those of the Hebrews. They, and not the laws and customs of the Hebrews, are God's will for that particular nation. (6) Even the laws and ceremonial observances of the Hebrews were binding upon them only so long as their political existence and security remained to them. When their kingdom fell, their laws fell; their strength became their weakness; the very intensity of their national unity as being 'God's chosen people' became the iron that entered into their soul when other nations treated them as "the enemy of the human race." When their political order expired, it was God's wisdom in the prophet which advised them to 'study the peace of the people by whom they were led captive,' to treat their old laws as abrogated for the time by God's will, and to live at peace under, and obedient to, the laws of their conquerors. (7) The rewards promised to the

Hebrews for keeping their laws, and the penalties with which they were threatened if they disobeyed them, were entirely harmonious with what has been said. They were not the joy and peace that come from a mind or soul at one with God, nor were they a virtuous character or a good will, or the knowledge of God's real nature as revealed in men and in the course of nature. This would have been to them, as it would be to every one, what Spinoza calls, the 'true life' or blessedness, the highest reward of all well-doing which is just the well-doing itself, or eternal life and the love of God for its own sake. But none of all this spiritual blessedness was promised to the Hebrews as their reward for keeping the laws prescribed for their obedience. What was promised them was, not "eternal life"—of that they knew nothing—but just those advantages which come from a civil and moral order of life well conceived and well maintained, viz. length of days, peace, prosperity, wealth, redress for injuries, protection against oppression, all those "temporal" advantages which life under a stable political system necessarily brings. If they were faithful and loyal to the laws through which their country maintained a distinctive place among the nations, then they would assuredly enjoy these advantages; if not, they would necessarily suffer the inevitable penalty of being homeless, friendless, strangers and aliens and bondservants in the land of their oppressors. The rewards would be God's rewards for obedience; the other would be God's penalties for disobedience, and the kings and nations who led them into captivity would be but instruments in the hand of divine justice.

All this, Spinoza maintains, is God's truth for every man who will see that God gives commands to men and nations through, but only through, the wisdom, insight, foresight, military and political and religious genius of specially gifted and inspired men. Without this, that is to say, *directly or immediately*, God gives no laws or commands which men may or may not observe. All laws of morality and of civil life men may or may not follow. Such laws also vary from one period to another, and from one nation to another.

They are not eternal truths. And all God's laws for man, as well as for the material world, are eternal truths. These moral and civil codes, then, are not necessary truths of Reason, which can be shown to be involved in the nature of each and every man. At the most, they can be known only with "moral certainty." But that is enough for the guidance of man's life, and he who seeks to have *everything* proved to demonstration is foolish. God's direct laws, which are the condition of a human existence under any and every form, can, however, be proved to demonstration, or deduced from the nature of man, from that of the least rational no less than from that of the most rational human being.

Before indicating the nature and number of these divine, ultimate, and inviolable conditions of a human existence, we may point out the meaning of another of Spinoza's strange sayings which is in place here. He often tells us that, to the student of Ethics and Politics, the vices of men are of no less interest and value than their virtues, and that the bad man acts no less than the good man in accordance with the laws of his own nature. The interpretation commonly put upon this is, that for God there is no difference between virtue and vice, and that to attempt to make bad men good is to attempt what is both undesirable and impossible.

This, I admit, might be Spinoza's meaning, if we separated his statements from the context in which they stand. But a statement, separated from its context, and accented as we please, may be made to mean anything. What it did mean for its author can be ascertained only by reading it in relation to the point he is discussing at the time. And what has also some significance is that Spinoza nowhere expresses any such view as is here ascribed to him, but in a hundred different passages contends for the very opposite view, viz. that neither for God nor for man are virtue and vice of equal value; and that all bad men not only *should* be changed into good ones, but *can* be so changed if we will take the trouble to think out the proper means to this end.

What then does he mean, if not the view above ascribed to him? He means simply, to put it as a truism,—that the vices of men are always human vices. Is that all? That is

all, and yet it is not all. For it is just to the failure of Ethical and Political Philosophy to analyse and understand the significance of this most obvious fact, that Spinoza traces the impotence and poverty of the ideals they have set up. They have preached until there was no more spirit in them. They have pictured ideal States until men were sick of the very name. But they have neither given any real uplifting to human beings in their struggle, nor helped to make Society stronger and freer, more stable in its order, and more wise in its regulation of conduct. This has arisen, not from their fondness for the ideal—no one prizes the ideal more than Spinoza—but from the fact that they have not gone down to the depths of human nature to find it. They have taken the most rational man they could conceive, asked how he would act, and what kind of State he would establish; and then they have set up this kind of conduct, and this Civil Order, as the best, or the ideal, for every man.

Spinoza maintains it is no matter for surprise that of all this labour there has been little fruit. It violates just one of those fundamental laws which God has imprinted indelibly on every human being, viz. that each man is the ultimate judge of his own welfare, and can be improved only through what appears to himself to constitute his good. To tell men that they *ought* to do this or that is to furnish them with no *motive* for doing it. *Ought* is not a motive. And you will not make men good without giving them *cause* why they should be good and not bad, any more than you will move the world without a lever and a point on which to plant it.

Ideals have their own high office in human life, but they must be dug out of, and work through the medium of, that common clay of which the wise man as well as the fool is made. If all men were wise, or if man were, as the philosophers used to define him, a rational being, how easy life would be, and how monotonous. It is because men are not rational, but only struggling with more or less success to become so, that all the problems of human existence have the character which they do have.

Hence, argues Spinoza, any effective ideal must present

its good to each man in that form which most appeals to him as his good. An ideal which is the same for every man is no ideal for any of them. Every ideal must take concrete shape in an organised life, for only this can bring home to each individual that form or type of a better or more advantageous existence to which his nature really responds. This, as we shall see, is what constitutes the right, and the *necessitas*, of the State to be. But the point to be noted at the moment is, that what Spinoza calls the "causes and natural foundations" of the State are "to be sought not in the teachings of Reason, but must be derived from the common nature or condition of men" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. I, § 7). And to understand this common nature or condition we must try to understand, and find a firm basis for the State in, the nature of every man, whether he is wise or ignorant. It is in this sense, and for this end, that if we want to know men we must be *in the first instance* indifferent to moral considerations, not thinking whether men are bad or good, but only that they are men, each gifted with a common nature, moved by the same passions, with the same deep loves and hates, struggling to do and to get, according to the dim light they have, what appeals to them as their best. This is why Spinoza insists that it is not the business of a serious student of human life to be repelled by human wickedness, or to be carried into an ecstasy by human virtues, or the virtues of an ideal human nature. His business is to *understand*, to understand, in the first place, what are the essential conditions of every human existence; in the second place, why, on the basis of the same common human passions, some men become good and others bad; and in the third place, in what way the 'bad will' can most readily be changed into the 'good will'; for that it ought to, and can, be so changed Spinoza nowhere expresses the slightest doubt.

Thus while virtue and vice mark the greatest distinction there can be between men, it is a distinction *within* the limits of, or according to the laws of, human nature itself, *i.e.* it is a distinction which arises from, and stands in virtue of, the common nature which makes men kin. The bad

man thinks, wills, desires according to the same laws and conditions as the greatest saint; though his thinking, willing, and desiring are like the groping of a man in the dark. But the groping *can* be changed into obedience and respect for social law, just because of this fundamental community of nature with those who are "more perfect" than himself. And the "more perfect" have the divine right to devise and to employ (and the divine duty or obligation to do so), all means that will really convince him that something else is 'better' for him, just because God has so made them that they cannot be 'more perfect' without having also the sense that they 'without him shall not be made perfect'; and because God has given them the power through their own clearer vision and *generositas* to conquer his ignorance, make him discontented with his poor joys, and in the end to make him 'glad' that the conquest, which is his liberty, overtook him.

Spinoza's point, then, is just the opposite of that which has been ascribed to him. He does *not* hold that the bad man is bad, because God has given him a different nature from the good man; and that by having this different nature to start life with he is therefore necessitated to be bad. The bad man is not necessitated to be bad, nor the good man to be good. If they were we might bid good-bye to Ethics and Politics, and fall back upon the Calvinistic and Augustinian mystery of predestination. This is supposed to be Spinoza's creed, or at least the logical issue of his creed, the legitimate offspring which (by some curious freak of Nature) he is ashamed to acknowledge in open day. In reality the issue is none of his; the paternity of it must be sought elsewhere.

Spinoza is indeed constantly speaking of a man being 'compelled' to act in this way or in that, of a certain action as 'necessary' or 'inevitable,' as necessary or inevitable as the fall of the stone, or the deduction of the properties of a triangle. These expressions undoubtedly make *misapprehension* of his meaning easy. But I think it can be proved (1) that these and similar expressions are used by all of us in the same sense in which Spinoza uses them; and that there are no other equivalent terms (as all language is from

first to last physical metaphor) which are not equally open to the same misinterpretation. And (2) that Spinoza never speaks of man as necessitated, compelled, determined, or of his actions as inevitable, the result of necessary causes, etc., except in the sense that he can act only in accordance with the judgments of his own mind, and that his actions are always necessarily the outcome of his own spiritual nature. No human action is ever done without a cause¹ which makes it necessary; but the cause is in the man himself. It is his own thought and desire which compel him. Compulsion other than this, there neither is nor can be. The State cannot compel a man to act against his own desire. Nor can God even so compel him, because God willed that he should have a nature which can think, and the power to think *ipso facto* excludes all outward compulsion, with the same 'inevitableness' as the properties of a circle exclude the properties of a square.

If, for example, we say, to use one of Spinoza's illustrations, "the conclusion from these premises is inevitable or necessary"; or say, "on the basis of this information laid before you you are *forced* to do so and so"; we simply mean

¹ It ought to be noted that '*causa*' had in Spinoza's day (as well as before and after his day) no such narrow meaning as it tends to have in the philosophy of our own day. It means to Spinoza cause, occasion, condition, reason, ground, motive, inducement, etc. Hence the special meaning which it bears in any particular passage can be gathered solely from the connection and context in which it is used. I venture to think that Spinoza would have been as much surprised to be told that in his system the 'cause' of a thought, an emotion, or an action, must be of the same nature as the cause of the sun rising or the rain falling, as the members of a railway 'board' or an educational 'board' would be to be told that this was a sure proof of their woodenness. A man's 'relations' with another man are surely not the same as the 'relations' of one stone with another, even though we do name them both relations. A little reflection will show that the general use of the word 'cause' is far more deeply-rooted in common thought and speech than the narrow physical sense to which Science tends to confine it, and in which Philosophy seems needlessly willing to acquiesce. But why the highest form of all causality, the most perfect type of a cause, namely, that which is embodied in human thought, intelligence, desire and action, should be denied the name to which it has by ancient prescription and by right the best title, and why that only should be a 'cause' which is the lowest form of causation, is a question that seems to call for some answer.

that the connection of these spiritual, or mental, causes and effects, or (to use another physical picture which for some occult reason is in more favour at the moment with philosophers) the connection of the motive with the action, is no less close and intimate than the connection of any material cause and effect. The view that a physical cause may determine a man except through his own thought and desire, Spinoza expressly repudiates. He tells us, for example, that thought can be determined only by thought. He points out that you do not make a man *happy* though you tickle him till he laughs; nor good though you fill him with the generous friendliness which generous wine can produce. And you do not regard a man as more free, because he can (through ignorance, stupidity, or folly), in the presence of certain premises, draw no conclusion at all, or feel that the case demands, necessitates, compels no action, or no action of a definite kind. It is just this power of seeing a certain conclusion in a problem to be 'inevitable,' and of feeling that in the presence of a certain crisis, 'I *can* do no other, God help me!' which constitutes the freedom and power and prerogative of human nature. "When I say that a certain inference is necessary, I don't say that a cow, or a fool, might not refrain from drawing it; but that he who understood the premises could not help doing so."

In the same way goodness and badness are always necessary, and have adequate definite *causes* from which they inevitably come. But this is just what rescues men from despair of themselves, or of others. If character had no ascertainable and well-defined ways of coming into being, man might curse himself and die; for his Reason would stand rooted in unreason, his morality would be the mockery of fortune, and his religion a blind superstition. He could not hope to 'better' himself or others, if he did not know what 'effect' education, or moral teaching, or good laws would 'necessarily' have. It is because he knows, or may know, this, that both the means and the end are in his own hands.

Clearly then, the cause of a man being vicious—or, to put it negatively, the absence of the cause for him being good—

falls within the spiritual, or mental, world. The connection between what the bad man does, and what presents itself to him as his interest, is no less close, than that which 'makes' the good man act in the opposite way. Each does what he thinks, that is, really believes, to be best for him. If the one believes wrongly, you do not alter his belief by telling him that, in your opinion, his belief is wrong. Your belief about what is his interest matters nothing to him. And as you do not alter his belief, you do not alter his conduct. This is why satire, pious denunciations and exhortations alike, anger, and even pity accomplish so little. They attack the joint where there is no joint. They seek to separate what God hath joined. And in doing so, they lose their pains, their tools, and their temper. For it is one of God's laws which never is nor can be violated, that no man *can* be improved save through his own judgment of what is for his advantage. You may persuade, and reason, and only spend your strength for naught. For unless you take away, or enable the man himself to take away, the *causes*, or reasons, which make his present judgment regarding his welfare an inevitable one for him, you simply irritate him and yourself. His judgment is not yours, because the conditions of his moral existence are not yours. If you wish him to know a better happiness, you must eliminate the conditions which at present make him *unable* to desire any happiness other than that which to you is repellent. It is no use trying to prove that the motive was inadequate, the judgment mistaken, the good misconceived, for in no particular case is that true, or proveable, if you take into account all that needs to be taken into account in the man and his circumstances. The causes must have been quite adequate to the effect, else the effect would not have been. That is, the effect was *necessary* under those conditions. If you want a different effect, you must alter the conditions. But the man's conduct you cannot alter, unless you lead him to judge differently. And you cannot lead him to a different judgment, unless you influence him by some *utilitas*, or advantage, which he (and not you) can appreciate and desire as 'better.' A proof from your point of view that he ought to act in your way,

and not in his, is a proof which has no effect on him, simply because God has not made him *capable* of being affected save through his own judgment of his own circumstances. An abstract "ought," not embodied in an ordered and stable system of social life based on Justice and Equity, is, to Spinoza, a contradiction in terms. It means nothing, and can effect nothing. The only "ought" that does mean anything is some positive tangible advantage which appeals to each man on the ground that it makes it 'worth his while' (and men always estimate this from different points of view) to follow one course of conduct which we call virtuous, and to refrain from the opposite.

The meaning and value of all this will become clearer as the argument proceeds. The point to be noted at the moment is, that for every good and bad action there are causes, adequate, sufficient, necessary in their effect. If we would have other effects, we must make the causes other than they are. It is foolish, yea a fighting against God, to denounce the action, and even to be indignant with the agent, when he, like ourselves, has only done the best he could, done, that is, what was, according to his judgment, inevitable. Spinoza's contention is, that if you are to root out wickedness, you must frankly recognise that it has definite *causes*, no less than your own goodness has, and unless you remove the causes, you are only wasting your strength in your indignation at the agent and his deed, and even your pity is but a veil of illusion which hides your real duty from you.

After all, it is so much easier to be angry, contemptuous, impatient, sanctimonious, and even compassionate. But it is stupid. It effects nothing except to make the moral problem harder. And it is (in Spinoza's eyes) profane toward God and toward man alike; for it involves that (in both senses) we owe nothing to others; and that, like the Pharisee, we can thank God for making us of another clay than they. Spinoza holds, and proves to demonstration, that the deep conviction of every religious man, "By the grace of God I am what I am," is the biggest truth in human life. He believes this with no less intensity than Bunyan when he

said of the murderer, "But for the grace of God I should have been as he is"; only Spinoza wishes to find out the *how* and the *why* of this. He refuses to be content to accept it as a religious mystery, or an unfathomable divine ordination. If it is God's law at all, it is there for man to grapple with, and understand, and guide his life more wisely by the knowledge of it. And it can, he holds, be explained, so as to be not only consistent with moral endeavour and social improvement, but so as to be the very breath of their life.

It is on the same grounds that he brushes aside the pretentious phrase which explains human wickedness by referring to an "inherent viciousness" or "wilful badness" or "a bad will" in some individuals. This seems to him no better, as an explanation, than the explanation of heat by a property called 'caloric,' or the explanation of the stone by a general property of 'stoni-ness.' It is simply ignorance masquerading as knowledge. The hollowness of it may be exposed by asking two questions. (1) Why, if the wickedness of others is due to these causes, do we not ascribe our own virtues to the corresponding causes, viz. to some "inherent virtuousness," "wilful goodness," or "good will"? And (2) why is the "good will" so common among certain classes, *i.e.* under certain conditions of human existence, and so uncommon amongst others? The virtuous will and conduct of the individual seems to have some close connection with, or dependence upon, or seems to be the effect of, conditions or causes with which that individual has had nothing ~~what~~ ever to do. If all the children of the criminal classes were, from their birth, brought up under precisely the same moral, social, religious, and intellectual influences which those "more highly-favoured" (the phrase is sound) have enjoyed, does any one doubt that there would be as much good will, good feeling, respect for law, and for virtue, and for religion, amongst them, as amongst their 'betters'? Spinoza at least has no doubt; nor any doubt that if the two lots were transposed, "bad will" and "lawlessness" would be the fruit of the same tree which now bears pleasant fruit. *Homines civiles non nascuntur, sed fiunt.* Moralisation, the good will,

the bad will, respect for law, for life, for the humanity in one's self and others, and equally contempt for them, are the product of human thought and will, that is the inevitable product of the conditions of existence which each *man* makes for himself and for others.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FUNDAMENTAL LAWS OF HUMAN NATURE.

THE full discussion in the last chapter will help to lighten this one. What has been shown is, that all human actions are necessitated ; but that this necessity can work only from within, or through thought in some form, and indeed, only through the thought and desire of the individual who is necessitated or determined.

The next point which needs to be considered is, in what ways does this necessitation work in the case of a human being, that is, in what modes can he affect and be affected ? Put in technical language (which in Philosophy at least has very much the defects of its qualities) what are the 'laws' of a human existence ? Obviously there are some things a man can do, and some ways in which he can be affected, which would not hold good of a pane of glass, for instance. But just as obviously, there are things the pane of glass can do and suffer which a man cannot. A man cannot be such a plane even surface, or translucent, or impervious, or effective against wind and rain ; he cannot break with a blow, or be cut with a diamond, or be struck without having something to say about the matter. The qualities of the glass are not his qualities, its ways of "affecting and being affected" are not his, *i.e.* the properties which it has as an essential part of Nature as a whole are quite different from his. And these peculiar ways of acting, and being acted on, are just what we call 'laws.'

The laws of a *human* existence are then the distinctive ways of affecting, and being affected by, other things and

beings which constitute, not a good man or a bad man, but a man. Men's goodness and badness stand on, or spring out of, this fundamental nature which they owe neither to the State nor to civilisation, but to Nature as a whole, or to God who has made them human beings and not monkeys or mountains. God's laws for man are, therefore, just those properties of human nature which make him from the first, and keep him to the last, a being among others, necessarily related to them and to outward objects, yet with his own distinctive ways of affecting and being affected by them.

It is to the failure of Ethical and Political theorists to recognise, analyse, and have regard to, these fundamental and divine laws of human nature, that Spinoza traces most of the unpracticalness of their teaching; while it is the chief glory, and honour, of statesmen and rulers of men, that they have, under the stern tuition of the logic of facts, learned to recognise that God has imprinted certain laws on human nature; that there are things which it will, and things which it will not stand; that there are some inducements to which it is amenable, and others to which it is not; that appeals to patriotism and righteousness in the abstract are of no use, unless you give these a concrete embodiment which each man can understand. Statesmen have seen through the pious fiction that virtue is always disinterested, and religion a sufficient safeguard for human liberties. *They* have not disdained to use the weapons upon which Theologians and Philosophers have cast contempt,—viz. the common passions, and emotions, which stir every man, whether he is wise or foolish. They have seen nothing unclean in this common human nature with its fear and hope, its love and hate, its envy, avarice, frugality, ambition; and, fashioning their instruments to what they had to deal with, they have really accomplished what Philosophers and Theologians would only talk about. By a well-conceived and administered political order, which gave men solid reasons for living together in harmony, they have enlisted in the interest of the good life those very passions which would otherwise have been its enemies.

We may quote one of Spinoza's most striking passages (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. I, §§ 1-2).

"Philosophers look upon the emotions by which men are stirred as vices into which they fall by their own fault. They are wont, therefore, to laugh at them, to weep over them, to carp at them, and those who make greater pretensions to piety, seek to hold them up to abhorrence. In thus acting they believe themselves to be doing something divine, and raising themselves to the highest reach of wisdom. In reality, the knowledge on which they pride themselves consists simply in much and varied laudation of a human nature which has no existence anywhere, and in revilings of that human nature which has a real existence. For they are not interested in men as they are, but only as they would wish them to be. Hence, in most cases, it is not an Ethic at all, but a Satire upon human nature, which they have written. And it is for this reason too, that they have never conceived a Political Order which is of any practical use ; but only a Chimaera, or else a Political Order which might have been established in Utopia, or in that golden age of the Poets when there was no need of any government at all. This explains why, among all the sciences which have a practical application, the Theory of Politics is believed to differ most widely from the Practice of it. And it explains also why Theorists or Philosophers are considered to make the worst rulers for a State."

"Statesmen, on the other hand, are believed to be plotting against men rather than working in their interest, and are considered astute rather than wise. This view of them is due to the fact that they, having learned from experience that there will be vices as long as there are men, try to prevent human wickedness ; and to do so effectively they make use of those arts which long practical experience has taught, and which men are wont to employ rather at the bidding of fear than of Reason. In making use of these arts, however, they seem to be running counter to Religion. Theologians especially are of this opinion, as they think that it is the duty of the rulers in the State to carry on public business in accordance with the same rules of morality as are binding on a private man. There can, however, be no doubt that Statesmen have written about Political problems to much more profit than Philosophers. For, as they have gained their knowledge from experience, they have taught nothing which is not of practical value."

The force of this will be evident if we note some of the chief laws of human existence on which Spinoza lays stress. As I have already said, these are not *moral* laws, but those peculiarly human modes of acting, and being acted on, out of which morality will arise. Spinoza sums them all up in that *conatus in suo esse perseverandi*, by which each tries, or

is impelled, to maintain and assert himself as far as he can. Not only has he a right to do this, as the power which is vested in him is God's power and right in him, but he must, or ought to, do it. And the obligation is not one which rests on any human law, or on any divine command coming through the thought and will of other men; but on something deeper and more inviolable than these, viz. the essential nature, or constitution, of the man himself, the imperious 'eternal truth' of his own nature, driving him on to choose and do what he judges to make most for his own welfare. Not only may he not forswear this, his birthright; he cannot if he would. God has not given him the power to be anything except a man, and to act in accordance with the laws of his own nature. Some theorists may call this the consecration of self-interest. Spinoza would take no exception to the phrase. It is the *consecration* of self-interest, the proof that it is God's interest in man, and that, like Jeremiah, it is already sanctified even before it comes to birth in moral and civil rules of conduct.

"It is the supreme law of Nature, that each thing endeavours to the utmost of its power to *perseverare in suo statu*, and to do so without regard to anything else, but only to itself. And it follows from this that each particular thing has the highest right to act in this way, *i.e.* to exist and operate as it has been naturally determined" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). "It is a universal law of human nature, that no one sacrifices anything which he judges to be good, unless from hope of a greater good, or from fear of a greater loss; nor does any one prefer anything bad, except in order to escape something worse, or in the hope of a greater good. That is to say, every man will, of two goods, choose what he himself considers the greater, and of two evils what seems to him the less. I say explicitly 'what appears to the man who chooses to be greater or less.' I do not say that the state of the case necessarily was as he judged it to be. And this law (*lex*) has been so deeply graven on human nature that it ought to find a place among those eternal truths of which no one can be ignorant" (*Ibid.*).

Thus the *conatus sese conservandi* works in each individual

man mainly through thought, or consciousness, or mind. Desire is not something other than thought, but simply a form of thinking. And all the emotions or passions of the soul (see Part 2, Axiom 3) are not alien forces in our mental life, but themselves mental activities. They do not need, therefore, to be changed into thought, seeing that they are already ideas or judgments. As such they involve in the individual not only consciousness or thought, but also a consciousness of *what* is desired, loved, hated, envied, etc.

Within this sphere of thought, desire, emotion, nothing comes which does not constitute a mental activity of the individual man. All thought, volition, desire, emotion are *sui juris* of the individual. Not only can no person or thing intrude there, except by becoming an object of his knowledge, love, desire, hate, envy, avarice, etc., *i.e.* except by becoming a new force in his spiritual existence and strengthening its energies; but also the individual himself cannot alter this condition, or 'law,' of his existence, even if he would. He simply *cannot* transfer his power of judging, loving, hating, willing, acting, to any one else or to any community. In this whole microcosm he is by divine right, and also by divine ordination, sole and ultimate judge. He cannot act otherwise than as he thinks. He cannot resign his judgment to another. He cannot believe at another's command. He cannot love because another enjoins him to do so. This inviolable character of human consciousness, thought, will, and purpose, is God's ultimate law for every human being, whether he be wise or ignorant. He cannot be moved save through his own thoughts, feelings, emotions, and wishes. He who wishes to change these must recognise this primary condition, and bend to the necessity it imposes. For he who tries to run counter to it might, with more wisdom, order the tide not to rise and fall.

We shall have abundant illustrations of the meaning and value of this 'law,' when we come to deal with the limits of State action, and its relation to the individual's freedom of thought. Here, we need only quote one or two passages, in confirmation of what has been said :

"No one can renounce his freedom of judgment, and of holding whatever views he pleases, but each man is, with the highest Natural Right, master of his own thoughts" (*Theol. Pol.*, Ch. 20). "No one can transfer to another his Natural Right, or his power, of reasoning freely, and of passing judgment on any matters whatever; nor is there any way of forcing him to do so" (*Ibid.*). "Men will always judge of things with their own mind, and will be thus far moved by this or that emotion" (*Ibid.*). "No one can renounce his faculty of judging; for, with what rewards or penalties can a man be induced to believe that the whole is not greater than its part, or that God does not exist; or to believe that a body which he sees to be finite is the infinite Being; and, in a word, to believe anything contrary to that which he feels or thinks? So also, with what rewards or penalties can a man be induced to love him whom he hates, or to hate one whom he loves? And to the same category are those things, also, to be referred, which are so abhorrent to human nature, that it considers them worse than any other evil, *e.g.* that a man should bear witness against himself, should act as his own executioner, should kill his parents, should not try to avoid death, and so on, things which no rewards or penalties can induce any one to do" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 3, § 8).

There are two interpretations of the principle expressed in these passages, against which it may be well to enter a caveat. They do not mean that each individual is free to think, feel, desire, love, etc., what, and as, he pleases. And they do not mean that his thoughts and emotions are so cut off from those of all other men, that he lives in his own little world, unaffected by, and unaffecteding the little self-enclosed worlds of other men. Against both of these 'by-ways of despair,' Spinoza has much to say in many connexions. Here, however, we can only assert that they are not his highway, and that alone concerns us now. What he does maintain is, that if men could love, hate, believe, think, will, desire, at the dictation of another, and even at the command of God, they would not love, hate, believe, etc., at all; for these activities are by their very essence exclusive of all outward determination whatsoever. You need not, he says, have this man, or that man, in existence, *i.e.* his essence does not necessarily involve his existence; but if any man does exist, then you cannot, even God could not, give him any other than this self-determining life. This is his prerogative in Nature, the *Jus Naturae* by which God has distinguished him from everything else. He has not only a life or soul, but he can

think. This is at once his freedom and his necessity. For he not only *can*, but *must* think. And that he *may* think more or less well, with more or less wisdom, is simply one of the inevitable consequences of the nature which God has given him. If there were no 'law' of human nature determining him to think, desire, will, and assert himself, he would not be a man but a chimaera, like a triangle with the properties of a circle. And if he could not think foolishly, as well as wisely, he would not be a thinking being at all.

What Spinoza, then, sets himself to do, is, to show that these thoughts,—the foolish as well as the wise,—these desires,—the lawless and immoral as well as the virtuous,—the greed, envy, ambition, and hatred of human nature, as well as its love, humanity, charity, and generosity, are the fruit, or the effect, of a God-given nature in each and every man; and that instead of these bad emotions being a proof that some natures are inherently and incurably vicious, they are a proof that these very natures are capable of coming to love what now they hate, of desiring what now they abhor, and of being moved by a passion for their kind no less intense than that which now drives them on to cruelty and lust. Without any exaggeration, we may say that Spinoza goes down into the very hell of human life, and finds God even there. For, if the men who are the slaves of their own lower passions, are "the children of wrath," they are so "even as others," no worse and no better in the nature with which their life began. If they are bad, it is because some of the causes necessary for their being good and useful have been absent; and these necessary causes, Spinoza holds, are always made by, and are therefore within the control of, the thought and direction of man, in a way which we shall see directly.

Thus the natural emotions and activities of men, even when they express themselves in envy, avarice, hatred, or crime, are, in a very real sense, God-given, or divine, powers. And the man who laughs at them—or even at their fruits—mocks them, is indignant at them, or hates them, is mocking God from whom they come. In saying this, Spinoza is by no means blind to the fact that these expressions of human capacity are the bane of our existence, and constitute its

wretchedness and sin, its shame and horror. And this truth will receive the amplest recognition immediately. But the point which he is here elaborating, to which he attached the utmost importance and to which he ever unweariedly returns, is a truth that is prior to, and deeper even than this one, viz. that we cannot understand why these, and not the opposite emotions, *are* the curse of man's existence, and still less can we know how to improve, or remove, this condition of things, unless we understand the nature of the bad emotions (as well as the nature of the good ones), and the causes from which they arise. That they have causes, and causes no less certain and inevitable in their operation than those which (in another sphere of being) make the sun and stars to move in their orbits, is a principle on which Spinoza stakes his reputation.

I am aware indeed that this is not the view usually taken of Spinoza's doctrine of evil. He is commonly represented as holding that all evil is pure negation, or absence of being, with no reality. Now, of course, if all badness is pure privation or unreality, it is not difficult to show that it is a non-entity ; and cannot either lift up its head against the good, or be transformed into the good. But if the view just mentioned is Spinoza's, it is strange that he should deny both of these conclusions which follow from it. It is still stranger, that he should be so resolute to find the *causes* of evil, causes which *ex hypothesi* cannot exist, since there cannot be a cause of what has no reality. But what is fatal to this view of his teaching is, that all the passages adduced in support of it are, when read in the connection in which they stand, not only *capable* of a quite different interpretation, but cannot possibly, if they mean anything, mean this. These statements will be justified in detail in the next chapter.

Spinoza's contention, then, is, that even the bad emotions of men display the divinity of human nature ; and that it is just because they do so, that they are not final but curable. If, on the other hand, you cut the connexion ; and make the wickedness of men unnatural, or inhuman, or inherent in man's nature from the first ; you cut away the very possibility of morals, religion, or social life altogether. If the

possibility—and the actuality—of being wicked, and lawless, and envious, is not a divine power, or *virtus*, in man; neither is the possibility and actuality of goodness and obedience and love. For the same essential energies are at work in the one case as in the other.

From this conclusion there is one way of escape, which Spinoza has already foreseen and blocked. It might be held, that God made all men good to begin with, either individually, or in the person of the first father of the human race; and that they have made themselves bad. This, however, raises more difficulties than it solves. (1) It does not explain why some men are good (comparatively speaking) and others bad. To say they are 'elected,' or to fall back on 'an inscrutable mystery,' is simply to name your ignorance, and be content with it. It is not only ignorance, but dangerous ignorance, as it tends to (and inevitably does, in every man who really believes it) paralyse all effort to understand the why and the wherefore of some men's misconduct, and all endeavour to make them better; and it necessarily produces that pride, which comes of the belief, that we are the authors of our own goodness, or (what is almost worse) the chosen vessels of the Almighty's grace. (2) It asserts what is impossible. For no one is, or can be, *born* good or bad. These are qualities which come into, and continue in, existence only through the exercise of the individual's thought, judgment, desire, and emotion. (3) To say that men made themselves bad, is to be blind to the other side of the statement, viz. that men are bad in virtue of those very powers which they enjoy from God. To say that they have perverted, or misused, these powers; and that their wickedness is the punishment of their earlier wrong doing; does not, admitting it to be true, alter the fact that God ordained that the perversion, abuse, punishment should take this precise form, viz. moral wickedness. If it is punishment, it is God's punishment. If it is abuse, it is the way in which God decreed that man should have the power, and even the inclination, to err and to sin. So that, even accepting this view, we involve ourselves in endless difficulties, and gain nothing in the end; for we are landed at

the point from which we started, that man's power for wickedness is God's power in him, only we prefer to call it God's punishment on man, while Spinoza prefers to call it God's law for man. (4) The view stated above throws no light on the problem of evil in human society, furnishes no weapons for diminishing it, no reasons for thinking that it ought to be, or can be, lessened, and points to nothing in human nature itself which makes the necessity of deliverance from it the 'eternal truth' of man's existence, even in the most degraded form which that existence is capable of assuming.

This Gospel of the sacredness of humanity under each and every form of it, Spinoza preaches with all the passion and earnestness of an Apostle. If no one is too bad for God to give him the power to live, and continue his energies, he cannot, were he the poorest slave, or passion's slave, be an object of contempt, or pity, or ridicule, to his fellow mortal. If he is, the loss is not all on the one side. For he "who feels contempt for any living thing, hath faculties which he hath never used"; and to despise another is to shut reality in some measure out of our own life.

Further, unless we are prepared to recognise this divine power and energy in every human life, working even through its wickedness and folly, where is the hope, or even the possibility, of that redemption of humanity which is the vision of every good man? It is for this reason, above all, that Spinoza is so insistent that this is the truth of all man's striving. For if there be no quickening spirit, no *conatus* after perfection, worked into the spiritual being of humanity, why should we not be content to 'let things be,' in ourselves and in others; to fight, and envy, and deceive, and live, and die, and there an end? What makes it possible, yea necessary, for men, alone of all created things, to fashion, to recognise, to defend and enforce laws for their own conduct, to feel 'a stain like a wound,' to love honour more than wealth, and to count even honour but the shadow of a felicity of soul that knows no inconstancy and no fear?

In this we have an indication of the ultimate meaning of that *conatus* of self-preservation which works in each man. It

begins in passion, in emotion, in desire, in judgments partial, inadequate, and untrue. But it is not in its nature to end there. Its beginning *must* be there, for 'that is not first which is spiritual but that which is natural.' But its end *cannot* be there. For it is reason, spirit, judgment in some form from the beginning. And because it is so, progress toward more perfect knowledge, more satisfying desire, more secure and just conditions of life, is an inherent necessity of its presence in man.

Spinoza generally calls this striving after perfection or *felicitas* or *beatitudo*, God's highest law for man. It is not another law than that *conatus* of self-assertion, which is present in all men, bad or good, and present in them from the first. It is simply this *conatus* attaining, or realising, what was in it, or bringing to birth the highest energies of which human nature is capable. It does not involve that each man shall attain this felicity, but only that each necessarily, through weakness and ignorance and pride and passion, strives after it, and would lay hold of it if he knew how. It is the universal striving after God, or after truth in every form, after a reality or good that will wholly satisfy man's soul. It is, therefore, the explanation of that divine discontent which works in all men, sometimes in the form of resentment of injury, or of unequal social conditions, sometimes in the passion for knowledge, sometimes in war and rebellion, and sometimes in the passion for wealth, or for fame; and which is under all forms the desire to 'better' oneself, however inadequate and mistaken be the idea of what 'betterment' involves. The universal striving to be, to do, and to get, is God's law for human existence. It is written on every man's soul. No one can help seeking after God. And "no one can hate God."

It involves, also, that happiness, or complete satisfaction, can be found only in certain objects, or in a certain relation of objects. It is not at the individual's option to be happy when, and how, and as, he pleases. He cannot be happy by resolving to be so. His blessedness is indeed possible, only through the exercise and development of his own powers; but this development is itself just the recognition of certain

conditions, or laws, or limits, of thinking, desiring, and acting as God's law for him. The wise man is he who knows where his happiness is and is not to be found; who has learned not to expect it in certain directions; who does not desire what ignorance craves for, nor bewail what he knows to be a law of existence. He has studied to rule himself rather than fortune, to give way to no vain regrets, and to find in the knowledge and love of God the last end of all human desire.

This point, viz. that the *conatus sese conservandi* is not a blind, uncertain force, working where, and how, and whither it pleases; but has its end determined from within itself, and can work at all, only along certain lines; and can find its consummation only in a certain attitude of spirit, will be dealt with more adequately in the next two chapters. We mention it here, only to give a formal completeness to our statement of Spinoza's interpretation of the fundamental law of human nature.

But it is also to be noted that if the knowledge and love of God is the last and highest end of man's endeavour, it is so, only because it comes as the fruit of a long struggle of man with man, of passion with passion, and of man with nature; and because it has gained the power which only such a struggle can give. For though a reader of the *Ethics* might carry away from that work the impression that the 'intellectual love of God' was simply the result of a process of reasoning, this is far from Spinoza's meaning. Even at the close of the *Ethics* itself, he tells us that the way of blessedness, which he has just been describing, is a very arduous one, and that the inherent difficulty of the task will render it always a high achievement possible only for the few. And in both the Political Treatises he is occupied mainly in showing, (1) that the *conatus* of self-preservation does, in almost all individuals, express itself in a lower and less adequate form; (2) that this is not the ban of man's existence, but the necessity through which he attains to freedom, and the assurance that deliverance is possible from it; (3) that the higher, and wholly adequate, good can be reached only by finding it to be already working in the lower; (4)

that if we would lead men to know and love the best, we must make that best evolve itself out of what now seems to them their good, and utilise in the higher interest the impulses, ideas, and emotions which really move them—however inadequate, mistaken, or bad we may think them to be; and (5) that as thus used, *i.e.* in the interest of the highest good of man's life and for its furtherance, none of these weapons, even though they be fear and avarice and ambition, are other than sacred—consecrated, like steel and iron and the shedding of blood, by the Holy War in which they are employed.

If, then, we are to understand the labour and pang through which morality and religion become, and are revealed as, God's highest or perfect law for human life; we must be prepared to see that God speaks in, and through, man, in many ways which are not directly moral or religious at all. Morality and religion are the fruit of human existence, but not its root. They pre-suppose both for their beginning, and throughout their continuance, primary conditions or laws of thinking, of desire, of love, of self-interest, of emotion. In this apparently dead soil they flourish; without it they would never be known. Withdraw it from them, and they die. Fail to recognise it, or attempt to violate the conditions it imposes, and your morality, religion, and civil law are but the idle wind which no man regardeth. Morals, religion, and State-legislation are binding and effective as, and only as, they have regard to, embody, and give a larger scope and exercise to, those still deeper impulses which prompt, yea necessitate, each man to do and be, and get for himself what is, according to his own free judgment, the best for himself. None of these higher interests ever can break, or tamper with the threads that bind it in continuity with these primary and ever-conscious *conatus* of human life—save at the price of its own impotence. For these are at once the strength and power of all sound morality, true religion, and well-conceived political relations; and also the divine nemesis which works not from without but from within, to make evil, superstition, and injustice inevitably overreach themselves.

Spinoza nowhere gathers together these natural fundamental laws, or conditions, of a human existence, or correlates them with one another. All that he does do is to point out (1) that they are all forms or expressions of the same impulse of self-preservation ; (2) that this impulse can only find rest in, and is ever striving after, the true and the good ; and (3) that the actual concrete working of political institutions, moral codes, and religious systems proves the intrinsic and essential place of this fundamental Divine law of human life, seeing that those which recognise it are strong and stable and permanent, while those which try to violate it in any way (and in proportion as they do so) are weak, divided against themselves, and quickly overthrown.

To many minds, the third of these points will be of most interest. And to prepare the way for the understanding of it, I shall simply *name* in this place some of the chief forms in which this fundamental principle works. The *proof* of these will come in the connections in which they are elucidated.

First and foremost, there is the desire for liberty, for freedom of action, of thought, and of will, implanted in every human being. The State does not create this, but itself grows out of it, and finds in it its chief instrument both of stimulus and of restraint.

There is also the idea that Right must always be power, and that only power is right. Right which has not, or cannot procure for itself, the might to make good and defend its claim, is no real right at all. Neither morality nor civil law brings this principle into existence ; but both (and even religion itself) assume and embody it. In virtue of it they stand ; and in virtue of it they enact and enforce commands that bear down the inclinations of individuals.

In another form, the principle presents itself as the axiom, that any compact between individuals or States will, and can, last only so long as it is for the mutual advantage of those who are parties to it. This axiom is neither morality nor immorality, neither fraud nor diplomacy, but simply a *fact*, or a law of man's nature which he cannot violate. It is the way God has made him, and therefore

either morality or immorality may make use of it, and neither can help doing so.

Similarly, it is an axiom of all human existence, that each man seeks his own private advantage with the greatest eagerness of which he is capable, and defends the cause of another only in so far as he believes himself to be thereby establishing his own. In vain will religion, morality, reward, or punishment try to alter this. And he, be he a ruler or a private man, who thinks that he can in any way, or by any inducement whatsoever, induce a man to look more to the interest of others than to his own, is simply showing his utter ignorance of human nature, and of what is and is not possible to it.

Again, no one *can* live according to the mind or judgment of another man, but only according to his own ; no one *can* do other than choose what is, in his own judgment, the lesser of two evils and the greater of two goods ; no one *can*, by any force at the disposal of the State, be made to live with wisdom, or be prevented from being—if his desires run that way—luxurious, envious, avaricious, or drunken. No State laws, however rigorous, *can* prevent men thinking as they please, and expressing what opinions they please. The desire for wealth, and for the esteem of our fellows, *cannot* be driven out of, or made less insatiable than it is, in human nature ; it can only be directed into some different channel. Nothing *can* make men prefer to be ruled rather than to rule ; nor does any man if he can help it make another his master. Men are so constituted, that they *never try* to make what is immoral into morality, or to destroy the laws of the State, but always try to give even their wickedness a cloak of justice and goodness. You *cannot* make a people slaves and have amongst them the fruits of civic freedom. Men in general have been *so constituted*, that nothing arouses in them so much resentment, as the attempt to prescribe what they should believe, and by what opinions they should be moved to love God ; nor is there anything of which they are so impatient, as of the opinions which they believe to be true being accounted crimes, and of what moves them to piety toward God and toward man, being punished as

wrongdoing. And lastly, all men have one and the same nature which, "dressed in a little brief authority," is proud ; makes itself a terror to others, unless they also have power to terrify it ; a nature which is elated by success, depressed by failure, more prone to envy the prosperous than to help the miserable, more prone to judge hastily and wrongly on imperfect information than to wait for fuller knowledge, more readily guided by hope than restrained by fear.

These axioms, or laws, of a human existence in any form whatever, Spinoza brings out in different parts of his works. I have put them together here that we may recognise the importance which he attaches to them ; and why they are treated by him, in the places where they are worked out, as the ultimate certainties, the inviolable conditions, of our life, against which all appeal would be foolish and all resistance vain. They are the axioms of all man's thought and action, simple, obvious, invaluable, if we recognise them and shape our creeds, our rules of conduct, our ordering of social life and political organisation in accordance with them ; but strong with the strength of God himself, firm as his truth, and infallible as his judgment, against all that would seek to violate them, to resist or overreach them. The outraged majesty of the law of gravity is but a poor analogue of the outraged majesty of humanity when, even in the elemental craving for food or for work, it does in literal truth make its appeal to God, and in his right avenges itself on those, be they rulers, or priests, or moralists, who did not fulfil the function for which the world called them into being, and gave them place and power.

Again I repeat that these 'laws' are not *moral* laws, but conditions on the basis of which morality must rest, through which it must work, and to which it alone can give the highest expression and the widest scope.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.

THE self-preserving impulse in the individual is not a wayward, indeterminate force. It may, indeed, be more or less enlightened, or yield a satisfaction of greater or less intrinsic value. It may know what it wants with more, or with less, clearness and adequacy ; and it may employ means which are well, or means which are ill, adapted for supplying the want. But in two respects at least, it does not, and cannot, vary. (1) It is always an idea or a judgment of the individual as to what would constitute his happiness. That is to say, it is the desire of self-satisfaction in a particular human being. And (2) it is always, in every form, the endeavour after God, the impulse to seek and to love him, or the desire for the most complete and perfect kind of life.

These two aspects of the truth might be called, according to our point of view, indifferently the beginning and the end of man's existence. We might say that self-assertion is the beginning ; and that the knowledge and love of God is the end. And this would suggest part of the truth. But it would be equally true to say, that the knowledge of God is the source and origin of all self-assertion ; and that the highest blessedness open to man is complete self-assertion or self-perfection. And thirdly, truer than either of these would be the statement that self-assertion and the knowledge of God are two sides of the same endeavour which grow with one another's growth, and strengthen with each other's strength. That is to say, he who knows little of God knows

little of himself, of his relations to other persons and things; and *can* find no true or abiding happiness. And, on the other hand, he who seeks the satisfaction, or self-assertion, of his nature in objects and social relationships which are worn out, or made worse, by his enjoyment of them, *cannot* know much of the love of God.

Thus to know oneself, and one's true happiness, is to know God. And to know God is, of necessity, to know and love one's own highest perfection. While he who falls short in either is necessarily defective in equal measure in both. This principle is, for Spinoza, at once the necessity and the freedom of human existence, its life and its limit, its prerogative and its restraint. It is the law of human existence which determines, from within, the nature and the line of its activities. For this reason, all man's problems are immanent in his own world of thought and will. And, for the same reason, whatever problems can spring up within his mind, *must* be capable of solution by that mind. If they appear insoluble, this can be due only to confusion of thought, or indolence, or mistrust of God-given Reason. The only really insoluble problems that can arise in human thought are problems falsely conceived, wrongly expressed, abstractly presented. The only questions which man can ask, and cannot answer, are questions which have no answer.

In the last chapter we laid stress, mainly, on the self-assertive side of human endeavour and desire, and merely indicated that there was another and complementary side. To bring out the place and significance of this complementary truth is the task of this and the next chapter. What has been shown is, that human passion in every form is sacred for the man who understands it, who loves men through the love of God. Every feeling, desire, longing of the human heart reveals God-given powers seeking for themselves the best satisfaction they know of. Simply to condemn them as bad, wicked, perverse, is to be blind to their cause and their cure, blind to the truth or reality of them, and helpless in confronting them. Nay, such an attitude is a logical fallacy. It does not distinguish between the momentary expression, or outward embodiment of an

impulse, and its soul or inner energy ; but, by condemning both alike, it makes virtue and vice alike real, positive, and final. Yet if any action were, in body and in soul, entirely evil, the very term would become unmeaning.

What Spinoza seeks to show is, that in the case of every evil action, the sentiment "they know not what they do" is not only the judgment of kindly charity, but also that of truth and perfect wisdom, the basis of all zeal for social improvement, of all civil law and punishment ; and that the opposite view, that men are bad, because they prefer to be bad, because nature has made them so, or because they are wilfully contumacious and rebellious, is the paralysis of all moral judgment, of all efforts after social improvement, of all State control, because it is not the *truth* of human action. The former view has the right to distinguish between evil and good, to work for the extension of goodness and the extinction of evil, and to work in the confidence that its labour will not be vain, just because it holds that no man ever does, or can, prefer, what appears to himself to be, his ill-fare to his well-fare. While the latter view has no right to make any moral distinction at all, seeing that morality is always a rule of life imposed upon a man by his own nature, or by God expressing himself in and through the individual's thought and will. And, for this reason, a nature *entirely* evil could be conscious of, and—to speak paradoxically—capable of, no evil ; and an action wholly bad would be vexed by no such inner discord as all immoral conduct necessarily involves.

This is why Spinoza maintains both that God's power is revealed in the bad passions and actions of men, and yet that God is not the cause of their badness. He holds both these views at once, by what appears at first sight a simple logical device, viz. by denying that evil is anything positive. If evil were anything positive, then God must be its cause ; and if he were its cause how could it *be* evil ? From this dilemma there seems no escape, except by making evil a simple negation or want of being.

Yet this way of escape is surely also a *cul de sac*. For if evil is simply not-being, or non-existence, why call it evil

any more than good, why indeed call it anything at all, seeing that it is nothing, or non-being? But why should it trouble us so much, if it is simply a negation, an unreality, a mirage? And why should morality and religion press it so hard, and give it no peace or rest, if it is from God's point of view an illusion, a nothing which tries in some occult way to pass itself off as something? If bad passions and actions are, when regarded from the divine or eternal standpoint, not bad but good, if their badness vanishes away, in the presence of a perfect intelligence, like a morning mist before the sun, ethics, politics, and religion seem to become alike superfluous.

These remarkable conclusions have been hailed as the logical result of Spinoza's thought. But the logic of them will be less convincing if we consider what Spinoza does say, and in what sense he calls evil a simple negation.

All human action expresses, we have seen, power or energy in the individual man. This power is ultimately God's power, for as no human being is self-created, and "his essence does not necessarily involve his existence," all capacities in him are derived directly, or indirectly, from God. To whatever ends, moral or immoral, the individual directs his energies, these energies are God-given and God-sustained. The power which enables the thief to ply his craft successfully is a divine gift no less than the power of the honest man to follow his calling. The power of Nero to slay his mother (see Letter 23, formerly 36) was a God-given power. The power in a man's arm, which enables him to strike another in his anger, is a divine gift to him. And in whatever direction a man's talents are employed, they are *as powers* equally real, equally positive, and even equally perfect. Human skill is no less evident in picking a lock than in making one. Mental power is no less displayed in telling lies consistently, than in telling the truth. And the dauntless courage and tumultuous eloquence of St. Paul were no less a divine and unique power, in the days when he helped to murder and imprison men "of whom the world was not worthy," than they were when he became proud to preach the faith which once he despised and persecuted.

Spinoza's first point then is, that all actions, inasmuch as they all involve powers, are divine energies, and energies which can be discerned as present no less in immoral, than in moral conduct. This, as we shall see, is far from involving that from a divine point of view goodness is no more real or desirable than badness: on the contrary, it is the first step toward the proof that the very opposite is the case. But what Spinoza is most earnest about at the moment is, that we should recognise human activity in every guise, whether we approve of its guise or not, as so much capital, or raw material, which God has given to man. A bad action is not, *as an activity*, any less real than a good one. And the fact that the activity has taken a bad form, is no reason for calling *it* bad, or unreal, or false, or illusory. To admit freely and fully that the powers of every man, however debased or criminal the ends to which they are directed, are the divine power in him, real, positive, and perfect, is the indispensable condition of all knowledge of the true nature of evil.

Thus a bad action is not to Spinoza an unreality, or a mere negation. It is, in respect of the natural power involved in it, as positive, or real, as any other. Hatred calls out energies of soul no less strong than love. Hence, from this point of view, the one may be as real as the other. And as God does not impose moral rules upon men from without and does not determine them to be good or bad, but only to be men, and to act according to the laws of human nature, *i.e.* to *become* good or bad through their own thought and desire, we may even say that for God, or through God, there is nothing bad.

This, however, simply means that the distinction and opposition between the good and the evil falls entirely within human life; and that it exists for God, only in so far as he gives man the power to create, to recognise, and to enforce this distinction, through the reason and will which are his peculiar endowment. No power that man has from God is in itself bad or imperfect. Nor can it ever become so. It may be used well or ill, employed for holy or for unholy ends, but in neither case does it cease to be a *virtus* or

potentia, and to have the *perfectio* of its origin. Only on this basis can morality arise. And, as the distinction between good and evil is a moral distinction, it does not, and cannot, apply to these fundamental powers themselves. *They* cannot be good or bad, virtuous or vicious, perfect or imperfect, real or unreal. They ever maintain themselves as a divine gift in the individual; and nothing that he does can make them unreal or evil.

Thus moral distinctions do not apply to the individual's powers themselves, whether we compare them with one another, or compare his powers as a whole with those of other men. A man is not bad, though he has no faculty for music; nor good, though he is endowed with a genius for mathematics. Neither is a man bad, though he has only one talent; nor good, if he has ten talents. Our moral judgments are not judgments upon, or of, these primary and constitutive characteristics of the individual nature. They are later in their origin. They arise on this basis, and do not create it. They are relative to these essential and invariable conditions of human nature and activity in each individual, and do nothing either to make or to change them.

Hence good and evil are distinctions, not only within human nature, but within the individual's nature. My good means, not an abstract or absolute law of goodness or duty; but what is good for me, or what will, according to the best judgment I can form, contribute most to my welfare or happiness, considering that I am a man with one, or with five, or with ten talents. This idea, that good is always relative to the individual, we proved already in an earlier chapter, and need not re-traverse the ground. What needs to be added here is, that the same holds true of evil. It also is relative to each man, is conditioned by his thought and desire, is *his* evil, or what presents itself to him as such.

This does not mean that my good is whatever I like to think it, and my evil the arbitrary creation of my own fancy. Indeed, it is just to lift moral distinctions above this arbitrariness and externality, that Spinoza insists that they are, in their origin and in their end alike, only "modes of thinking." For thought has its own laws, conditions, principles; it may

be more or less adequate or true ; it lives and moves in an atmosphere of self-criticism ; and it cannot rest in anything but the complete knowledge of reality. No man *can* think whatever he likes, but is always thinking the real in some form.

Hence I can make moral distinctions only as I think, or know, my own nature or powers, and the conditions within me and without me, under which these powers can find their exercise. I may not know either of these save in the most inadequate way. But I do know something of them ; I do know God, or the truth, in some measure, even in my most erroneous and mistaken judgments. Apart from this, good would be to me an unmeaning sound, and evil an empty name. No one can be a member of a moral universe, save as he can apprehend for himself the nature of the powers with which he is endowed, the conditions social and physical under which alone these powers will work, and the good or welfare which, under these conditions, or limits, is open to him. No one, in fact, can make, or be amenable to, moral judgments, save as he can, and does, think ; and no one can think about anything else except reality, as Spinoza amply proves in the *Tract. de Intell. Emend.*

From this it follows, that error is simply absence of knowledge. This does not mean, however, that an erroneous conclusion is simply a negation, or an illusion, or unreality. Spinoza holds, on the contrary, that an erroneous conclusion is never any less grounded in reality than a correct one. Some erroneous conclusions may, indeed, be more true, or real, than other correct conclusions. What makes them false is, that we bring together phenomena, or ideas, and inter-connect them in ways which our insufficient knowledge of their nature does not warrant. We may seem to know the meaning of 'fly,' and of 'infinite' ; but our conclusion, that an infinite fly is quite a possible phenomenon, arises because of the *absence* of adequate knowledge of the nature of each of these ideas. So we can imagine a man speaking, and we can also imagine a tree ; but if we proceed to think of a speaking tree, we are connecting ideas, true and real in certain relations, even within our own knowledge, in other ways, in

which we *could* not inter-connect them if we understood the nature of each of them better. The data from which we proceed are quite real and valid ; but our unlimited freedom of connecting and disconnecting these ideas is the sign that we are deficient in the precise knowledge which would *force* us to connect them in one way, and make it impossible for us to relate them in another. No statement is false, except in the sense that it connects phenomena, or portions of experience, in ways in which one cannot really think or know them. Hence the data are always valid facts in the real world. And it is for this reason that erroneous or mistaken views are so dangerous. If they were simply unreal, false, illusory, we could afford to disregard them ; they would be their own nemesis. But they are always rooted in reality. And the hard and ever-pressing problem of our lives is to show that ideas *cannot* be connected in one way, because they actually *are* related in another way. The discovery of these real relations is the only proof of the mistaken nature of the relations in which the facts were supposed to stand. "Truth is at once its own evidence, and the disproof of what is false."

Spinoza's point then is, that the error of, or in, a statement, or conclusion, is *want* of knowledge, and not wrong knowledge or deception. But the statement, and the facts on which it rests, are at the same time, and must be, grounded on actual experience, or valid of reality ; and this can be justified by anyone who will take the trouble to understand them. That is to say, if the man who is able to imagine a tree speaking, has something added to his knowledge of the nature of speech, and of a tree, he will no longer be able to think them in this relation to one another. Or, if you add to a man's knowledge of the solar system, he will no longer be able to connect the ideas of earth and sun as he once did, or to think of the earth as the centre round which the sun revolves. But in neither case do you prove unreal, or false, or illusory; the knowledge, or experience, which he did have in his erroneous inference. You simply make determinate in a further degree the universe of thought within which he defines and relates all his ideas. Of course, this involves

that the distinction between a true and a false statement is never absolute, in the sense that the one cannot be changed into the other. This is so, because *no* statement *ever* is absolutely true or absolutely false; nor can it be, so long as human thought is in its lowest and poorest form an effort to understand, and in its highest flights of genius no more.

These principles hold good not only of man's intellectual life, but also of his moral nature. Indeed, the common separation between these two, Spinoza entirely denies. Intellect divorced from morality, or morality parted from intelligence, is to him inconceivable. The only basis for any distinction between them is that we can establish relations with other men which we cannot, however well we know them, establish with a dog, or a river; and that, therefore, the social life which makes, and keeps, men kin is *sui generis*, and needs a special method for its understanding. But why we should call a man who knows all about the stars, or the bees, intellectual, and not give the same name to him who knows how to follow justice and charity through the love of God, would be to Spinoza an enigma. He indeed regards the "intellectual love of God" as the highest end, and blessedness, of which human nature is capable. But it is quite a mistake to read either mysticism or intellectualism in this phrase. It simply means that to know God is to love him; and he who knows him, and sees him, most in all things and beings, and sees them only through him, is supremely blessed. It is true, that he who knows about the stars, or the bees, knows something about God. But if he who knows this is a bad father, or quarrelsome, envious tyrannical, or mean in his relations with others, he shows thereby that he knows little about himself, or his true happiness, little about his fellow-men, and their welfare, and his duty towards them; and this is, after all, the most difficult, and by far the largest, part of the sum of human knowledge. Hence he who knows the one, and does not know the other, would be "almost entirely ignorant of God," and would have very little real intelligence. On the other hand, a tradesman who followed his craft honestly, and knew how to make his

home a circle of light and love, and to extend the influence of justice and charity among men, would, in Spinoza's use of the phrase, show infinitely more of that "intellectual love" of God, which constitutes man's perfect blessedness. Nowhere, I think, does Spinoza conceive the knowledge of God as possible except in, and through, the Mind (*mens*). All knowledge and love of God is mental knowledge. And the highest form of this knowledge is not that which rests on reasoning; but rather, that which unites the individual with the object of his knowledge, in an "intuitive" vision of his welfare. An intellectualism which is not also the love of goodness in oneself and in others, is to Spinoza a bastard intellectualism. He refuses (as Comte afterwards did) even to admit that science can have any other end than the furtherance of human welfare by defining more clearly man's place in, and relation to, the rest of the universe; and by enabling him, thereby, to attain a better and more complete happiness.

Thus the explanation of error is also the explanation of evil. A bad action is just a wrong or mistaken judgment, a defect of knowledge of our own welfare. If we knew what was our good we would do it; and if we do not do it, it can only be that we do not know it. Of course, there are mistakes, and mistakes; in so far as the consequences in different cases may be very different. Some errors of judgment may be much less dangerous to oneself, or to society, than others; and some of them may need no special correction, while others may require most drastic remedies. To address a stranger by mistake, is an error of judgment which needs, and receives, very mild correction. To think that 2 and 2 make 5, is an error of judgment which will be corrected gently, or sternly, according to the temper of the schoolmaster, and the number who share our belief. To mistake another man's rights for one's own, is an error of judgment for which civil law may furnish very unpleasant remedies. While to mistake the distinction between *meum* and *tuum*, or to believe that you can make a better use of a man's money than he can do himself, is a mistake to which men are so much tempted, and whose consequences are so fatal to their

harmony, that no form, or mode, of correction is considered too severe in such a case.

Thus mistakes, or errors, may vary very widely in respect of the conditions in and through which they arise ; and in respect of the nature of the consequences which follow from them. And, as these are part of, or give character to, the error or mistake in each case, we may even say that some kinds of error, which we call evil actions, differ in their nature from others, which we call simple mistakes or misjudgments ; and that the former are more heinous, or more to be guarded against, than the latter. Spinoza would admit that there is a great, and even an intrinsic, difference between a guide mistaking his road, a speaker mistaking the temper of his audience, a statesman misjudging the policy of another nation, a merchant miscalculating his credit, a slanderer misapprehending the truth, a thief taking money out of the wrong pocket. But the distinction is to be found either in the consequences of each act, or in the conditions which produce them, or in the kind of means which will correct the error, or (better) prevent it arising. And no distinction is to be found, either in the greater or less necessity of connection between the cause and the effect, or in the desire on the part of some men to do what they *know* not to be their good.

Evil then, in every form, is want of knowledge, or understanding, of our welfare ; and the bad will is simply bad thought. He who knows himself, and his true happiness, cannot help seeking or willing it. For we do not first think, and then deliberate whether we shall, or shall not, choose, or desire, or will, what appears to us to be for our welfare. This double movement, with its definite and separate stages, Spinoza entirely denies ; it is the creation of abstract thought which makes breaks where there are none. To think our welfare *is* to will or desire it. Not to think it *is* not to will it. If any man had been so made that he could know, or believe, a certain course of action to be the best for him ; and could yet act in the opposite way ; then evil would indeed be a mystery. There would be no cause for it. And where there is no cause, there is no cure. Such

a man—to say nothing of a world of such men—would be a hopeless problem to himself, as well as to others. The bad will is curable, just because it can be traced to a definite cause, or to the absence of a definite or ascertainable cause. It is one of Spinoza's first principles, one of the laws of God written on human nature, that a man believes in, or knows, just exactly what he does. His creed is not what he says, or subscribes to, but his conduct. His practice is his belief. He who professes to believe that love is better than hate, kindness than cruelty, love of truth than love of wealth or honour, and, at the same time, indulges in hatred and cruelty, and makes the love of wealth or honour the ruling motive of his life, does not really believe or know as he professes to do. Men may assent to any doctrine, or theory, or creed, for the less one knows about a thing the easier it is to assent to any proposition regarding it; but they believe in, or really know, nothing except what they actually follow and practise in life. A man's conduct is his theory of the Good. From this infallible basis, all attempted moral reformation in ourselves and in others must begin. No doubt it would be pleasanter to be able to feel that we are always a great deal nobler, more generous, and higher in our aims, than our actions show; but it is never true. We will and we do *all* that we really believe in. To assent in general terms to some ideal of life as good for men, or even as good for us, is not to think or know it as our good; else, we should all be saints misunderstood.

This principle will be illustrated in other connections. The bearing of it at the moment is, to define for us the precise nature of the problem of evil. It shows that the difference between men is not the 'bad will' in some men, and the 'good will' in others. It is not true that all men know the good as their Good, only some deliberately choose it, while others deliberately reject it. If it were true, this would be the end of the matter; moral education, training, punishment, reproof would resign the hopeless task of 'making bricks without straw,' and even without clay. But the quenchless faith of the moral endeavour for ourselves, and for

others, draws its whole inspiration from the belief that no one will, or can, do the worse for himself, or seek his own ill-fare, once he really knows wherein his good does consist. You can make men do better by making them know better ; and you cannot make them do better except by making them know better.

Of course, even this is no easy task. It is a slow, laborious, and endless effort. For you do not make a man any better, that is, know his good any better, by telling him that, in your opinion, he is making a mistake by getting angry, or drunk, or untruthful, any more than you can make a child a second Cicero by reading Cicero aloud to him. In both cases there are causes or motives which will, and others which will not, further the end ; in both, there are necessary stages and processes through which the work must be prosecuted and maintained, through fair weather and foul, if there is to be any success at all. But all this work, and the end to which it is to lead, fall within the compass of human nature ; and those who seek it and labour for it, if they do so with judgment and intelligence, are labouring not in the strength of their own arm, but also in the strength of God, who has so made all other men that they "gladly yield" up their lesser good for a better one, when they *see* that it is better for them ; that they can be, and even wish to be, thus converted ; and that they are capable of being so changed as to hail the hour of their forced submission as the beginning of their real freedom.

In every bad action then there are three elements which we may distinguish. (1) There is the activity or energy or power in the man himself, and in the rest of Nature, which makes the action possible. This is not bad, and never, under any circumstances, can be. It is part of the power, or perfection of God, which morality does not create, nor immorality destroy. (2) There is the idea of, or effort after, self-satisfaction, which we call desire. Every action is self-expression on the part of some individual, an endeavour to be, and to do, the best for himself, the 'best' being—by a necessity which he did not make, and cannot elude—estimated according to his own intelligence and judgment. In this sense, "desire is

the very essence of a man's nature." It embodies his own view of his welfare; it is his own judgment, formed from an intimate knowledge of his circumstances which no one else can have. For this reason the action is *his* action. Hence the term 'bad' cannot be applied even to this second element. The essence of a man cannot be bad; for that only can be bad which can also be good. The endeavour of a man to be, and to do, according to his own judgment, the best he knows, cannot be bad. His effort to realise himself, to assert himself, to get all he can, and to make his life as perfect and complete (according to his own idea of completeness) as he can, is the first law of his being, which God has graven indelibly upon his nature, and without which a human life would be inconceivable, and morality impossible. (3) A bad action is an inadequate idea or a wrong judgment, and it is bad only in so far as it is inadequate. Hence, even here the badness is not absolute, for the *idea* is not bad. That only is bad, which is wanting to make the idea adequate or true. The badness, or evil-ness, of the act is, that something is lacking in it. It is not that something is there, which should not be there; but rather that something is not there, which might, and ought to, be there. And it is this defect, want, absence, or negation of being, which makes us call one action bad in comparison with another, called good, in which the want is not found, or is found in less degree. Hence, even when we call a whole action bad, we have to remember that this is not the strict truth, but only a rough description. What is of real importance is, that an evil deed is not wholly bad. If it were, it would be at peace with itself, and it would thus be in nowise inferior to a virtuous one. It is just because it is not wholly bad that it can find no peace unless it seek that which is wanting to it; and the finding of this, *ipso facto*, converts it into a good one.

This explains why Spinoza holds (1) that the evil-ness of a human life, or action, is a negation or unreality, of which God is not the cause, seeing that what does not exist cannot have any cause; (2) that evil actions as well as good ones are possible only in, and through, God; (3) that it is because of this under-reaching and immanent activity that bad actions

do condemn themselves as bad, call for their own correction and work out their own punishment if not corrected ; (4) that the distinction between good and evil is no less divine, and absolute, though it exists only through, and is maintained only by, human thought and will ; for this thought and will is the most divine form in which God has revealed himself ; (5) that the badness of an act is not the truth or reality even of that act, but only its unreality ; and (6) that while the badness cannot be changed into goodness, seeing that to change nothing into something, or the unreal into the real, is impossible ; yet every bad act can be so altered in character by being placed in its proper setting, and having its defect thus removed, that it will cease to be evil and become virtuous.

These ideas are expressed by Spinoza in such passages as the following :

"All ideas, in so far as they are referred to God, are true" (II. 32). "There is nothing positive in ideas, on account of which they are called false" (*Ibid.* 33). "There is nothing positive in ideas which may constitute the *formam falsitatis*. Yet falsity cannot consist in simple privation (for it is Minds, and not Bodies, which are said to err, or be mistaken), nor can it even consist in simple ignorance ; for not to know, and to make a mistake, are two different things. Hence, falsity consists in the privation of knowledge which an inadequate knowledge of things, or inadequate and confused ideas, involve" (*Ibid.* 35). "Most errors consist simply in this, that we do not apply the right names to things. For, when anyone says, that the lines which are drawn from the centre of a circle to its circumference are unequal ; he assuredly understands by a circle, at the time at least, something else than the Mathematicians do. So, when men make a mistake in counting, they have other numbers in their mind than those on the paper. Hence, if you have regard to their Mind, they do not really err ; but they seem to do so, because we suppose that they have in their mind the numbers noted on the paper. Did we not make this supposition, we would not believe them to be guilty of any error ; as I did not believe that the man was *really* mistaken, whom I lately heard shouting that his premises had flown into his neighbour's hen ; because, that is to say, his mind and meaning seemed to me clear enough" (*Ibid.* 47, Schol.). "Falsity consists solely in the privation of knowledge which inadequate ideas involve. Nor have they anything positive on account of which they are called false. On the contrary, in so far as they are referred to God, they are true. If then, that which is positive in a false idea were destroyed by the presence of the true, in so far as it is true, a true idea

would be destroyed by itself, which is absurd. Therefore, nothing positive which a false idea has, is destroyed by the presence of what is true, in so far as it is true" (IV. 1). "I hold that God is absolutely and truly the cause of all things which have essence, no matter what they be. If then you [his correspondent, Blyenbergh] are able to prove that Evil, Error, Crimes, etc., are anything which expresses essence, I will entirely concede that God is the cause of the crimes, of the evil, of the error, etc. But I think I have sufficiently shown that that which *ponit formam* of evil, of error, of crime, does not consist in anything which expresses essence; and so, it cannot be said that God is its cause. Nero's crime of matricide, for example, in so far as it embraced anything positive, was not a crime; for Orestes did the same external action, and had also the intention of slaying his mother; yet he is not condemned,—at least not as Nero is. Wherein then did the wickedness of Nero's action consist? In nothing else than that he thereby showed himself ungrateful, ruthless, and disobedient. And it is certain that none of these expresses any essence, and that thus God was not the cause of them, although he was the cause of Nero's act and intention" (*Letter 23*, formerly 36).

Spinoza's argument then is, that a false idea, or a bad action, is an incomplete unity, a whole with something wanting, like a body without a limb, or a sentence with the words misplaced. What is positive, and real, in the idea, or action, is a fragment, which is misleading if related in a haphazard and indefinite way to any other fragment, but which can get, nay demands, its true significance in some definite relation. Thus error, or evil-doing, does not mean simple ignorance of, or not-knowing a thing—such as for example we may predicate of a stone or a dead man; it is not absolute, or simple, negation. It is knowing a thing only partially, in an inadequate or confused way. The negative is always relative to a positive. What you don't know or do, is always suggested by what you do know and do; and you can say you don't know it, or don't do it, solely because you are conscious that what you do know, or do, is not a self-consistent whole, or a satisfying good, and cannot be made so, until it finds the missing element which would complete it.

Thus, evil actions and false judgments are always at war with themselves, as well as with one another. This is why they are evil and false. They are inconstant and variable; and their worst enemy is he who believes them and seeks to

make them complete. But human nature *must* do this ; for it has been so made that no one ever willingly believes what is false, or does what he thinks to be bad for him. Every man tries to reconcile the different parts of his experience with one another, to think detached impressions together, and to do what presents itself to him as on the whole the best for him. His life—however wretched the result—is a constant effort to know the true and to do the good.

→ It is from this point of view that Spinoza looks at the process of moral growth. No man ever *can* believe what he knows to be false. No one ever *can* do what he knows not to be good for him. The moral problem therefore is not, that men know their good, but will not do it. It is, that they do not know their true good ; but think, or desire, their happiness in ways, and through objects, which yield no lasting satisfaction. But nothing will change this, except as they themselves find, or have given them by others, reasons for changing their belief. And these must be reasons which they can understand, reasons which they themselves will think better than the reasons on which they formerly judged and acted. The child who recognises that by ' being good ' he will get more apple-tart, or fewer punishments, has found, or had given him, the kind of reason which convinces *him* that it is better to be good than bad. The employer who pays his workman a better wage for skilful and careful production, gives him the reason which will most readily change his belief, that to scamp his work is his interest. The society which, by well-made laws, puts a premium upon industry, education, enterprise, honesty, thrift, or family affection, furnishes to almost all its citizens adequate reasons or causes for coming to believe that these qualities are their good or interest. While to a few rare spirits the love of truth for its own sake, or of God because this alone they know to be perfect bliss, is the sufficient reason, or adequate cause, which makes them willing to sell all they have, and all that the world can give, for the joy of its possession. These various motives, or causes, are not of the same value. They differ intrinsically in truth, in nature, in perfection. But in two respects they are all alike. (1) They are all

steps in, or means toward, moral progress. This justifies the use of the apple-tart as, relatively to the child, a better moral argument than the love of truth for its own sake. But it justifies it only in relation to this stage of life; or as the kind of motive which will be most effective in leading the child to feel that there are better things in the world than apple-tart. And (2) all these stages of moral endeavour are so linked together that no one can reach the highest without exhausting the lower stages; and no one can desire the lowest, or least adequate, good save under the form of the highest, and he is, therefore, forced, by the very nature of his own desire, to be always seeking a more complete good than he has been able to define or grasp in detail.

This onward, and upward, endeavour is the law of man's life. It is so because God has given to every man the idea of truth, of a complete good or happiness, the idea of God himself. This is graven, Spinoza holds, so deeply on man's spirit, that he who ceases to have it, ceases to be a man at all. What this "idea of God" in us involves, we shall see in the next chapter. Here, we need only note that it is the source and explanation of the fact that man cannot find rest in evil, because evil is not the wholeness, or truth, of life. All are seeking a perfect happiness, and a bad action is so named, because it belies its own promise of bringing us to our happiness. Yet a bad action is never wholly bad, just because it is always the search for goodness, or complete satisfaction. For this reason, all that is positive in it, the strength, the thought, the skill, the emotion, the struggle to know and to get, the affection, the daring, can be so utilised, or receive such a different setting, that they will become the honour and blessing of human existence, where now they are its shame and its curse. Take, for instance, an act of theft. We call it a bad action. That is true in the gross, and it is all that the policeman, or the judge, needs to care about. For the policeman and the judge are there only to detect, and punish, theft; not to cure it, or understand it. Yet the true end of society *is* to understand and cure it so effectually that the policeman and the judge may become superfluous. And to understand theft is to cure it. What then makes it

bad? The cleverness is not bad. The quickness of hand is not bad. The sharpness of eye for danger is not bad. The power to discern an easy victim is not bad. The nimble wit for eluding, and the boldness in facing, discovery is not bad. All these qualities are God-given powers, which can, when otherwise directed, bring honour, wealth, and power. What is bad—the fly in the ointment—is, that these powers are employed in taking money out of a man's pocket without his leave, and without doing him any service which he values; instead of taking it out of his pocket with his leave, by doing him such service as he does value. Hence the thief can be changed into an honest tradesman, or merchant—or, what is much better, prevented from becoming a thief at all—by convincing him that these powers can be employed to his own greater advantage in another line of life. The 'convincing' is not easy, at least when it is begun late, and practised on men in the mass, and applied chiefly by those who have no interest or power to make it 'fit' the individual man. Habits of thought, desire, and action are not changed in a moment, nor changed at all simply by punishment. But they can be changed by the same process which produced them, viz. by recognising that even the thief is, according to the poor light he has, seeking what appears to him to be his good, and by giving him such 'reasons,' or 'causes,' for following another course, as he himself will judge to be better than those which have hitherto guided him.

Without this golden thread running through life's web, evil would be a hopeless mystery. With it, nothing is hopeless, incurable, God-forsaken. And when Christianity saw that even the worst of men might be saved, and proclaimed to the world that there is a soul of goodness in things evil; it was only making known the 'eternal truth' of every human existence, the fact that every man has God's law written on his heart; and that amid all his sin, and folly and error, he is ever seeking that perfect satisfaction, which is only to be found in the knowledge and the love of God.

To this argument there are two objections which will naturally occur to a reader. And it will bring out Spinoza's point of view if we indicate his attitude towards them.

(1) Does this not involve that we have no right to blame any one for being bad, and doing badly, no right to be indignant and angry at wickedness? The answer is, you have no right. You have no more right to blame, or be indignant and angry at, the wickedness of another, than you have to be proud of your own goodness and virtue. The only right you have is, by means of the better powers, or education, or moral training, with which you have been privileged above your neighbour, to make him love, and choose, a better mode of life. If punishment will further this end, you have a right to punish him in the mode, and in the degree, which will best realise this. If better education, better conditions of social existence, more equitable conditions of labour, a purer or richer family life, will contribute—as they will in far greater measure—to this end, then you have a divine right to make him love the better life through these means. Unhappily, we call this latter right a duty, or religious obligation; and we are ever less eager that our duties should be enforced, than that our rights should be recognised. But this is no less a right, than a duty, just as the right to punish is equally a duty to punish.

Spinoza, therefore, contends that you have no right to be angry or indignant, (1) because this does no good; (2) because it does not take away or alter the Causes which make men bad; (3) because it blinds you to the real cause, which is not simply the man, or the man's bad will; but all the influences which have made him the man he is, intellectually and morally, and made him succumb to a temptation which to a man trained and living in another atmosphere would not even have presented itself; and (4) because only the discovery and removal of the Causes, or motives, of human badness will do any good; and for this task the moral reformer needs all the clearness of vision and calm wisdom with which he is endowed, and cannot afford to becloud his eyes, and dissipate his strength with anger, or indignation, or even with pity.

The second objection we shall notice is, that Spinoza's account of moral evil seems to reduce the distinction between goodness and badness from a difference of quality or kind

to one of quantity or degree. Instead of goodness being an intrinsically different thing from badness, we seem to have made them into a 'more' and a 'less' of the same thing. If the one is an adequate or true idea of one's good, and the other simply an inadequate idea of the same good, surely there is no essential difference? Spinoza's answer to this would be, (1) that the distinction between evil and good is not, and cannot be, absolute. It cannot be even so wide as the distinction between a tree and a stone. Even that is a distinction within a universe. The distinction between a bad man and a good one falls not only within the universe, but within human life and society. There is much more in common between a bad man and a good one, than there is between either of these and the horse he rides. Even the precautions and safeguards, which the honest man must take against being robbed or murdered, are a proof that other men are his chief friends, or worst enemies, and are, in either case, the chief factor in his existence. The divisions and hatreds between men show that they cannot get away from one another, just as the fact that "most disputes and dissensions arise out of the social ties that have their origin in marriage" does not tend to discredit that institution, but only, as Boccaccio says of Roman Catholicism, to show how strongly it must lay hold of human nature, when it can stand, despite its many contentions. (2) The distinction can never be made so complete that it does not fall within the life of each individual man. To say that some men are good, and others are bad, is not true, except with much qualification and explanation. No one is quite good, and no one is wholly bad. The distinction is not between black and white, but between the innumerable shades that lie between. Moreover, we always assume that a man can, and does, pass from a worse moral state to a better, or *vice versa*. His better state, in comparison with his worse, is good; while, in comparison with the still better state to which he may attain, it is bad. We cannot get any moral distinctions which are fixed and unchangeable, so long as morality is necessarily a growth. (3) The distinction between an adequate and an inadequate idea of good is not a distinction of quantity

as contrasted with one of quality. It is not a distinction of more and less, as compared with one of nature or essence. Spinoza holds that the quantitative mode of thought is an imaginative way of picturing the truth in any case; not the expression of its real nature. It is, at best, the suggestion of deeper differences; and unless it carries us on to a knowledge of the real nature or qualities of the thing, it is not even suggestive. Thus, while he contends that a bad action, in order to become a good one, only needs to be made complete, or to be given a different setting; he also contends that, *until this is done*, the difference between the two actions is, from any point of view, intrinsic and essential. "They differ in nature from one another." From the point of view of civic usefulness there is a difference of *nature* between the child and the man, though the child will grow into a man. From the point of view of the man who wants his pencil sharpened, there is an *essential difference* between a blunt knife and the same knife sharpened. From the point of view of the hungry man, there is an *essential difference* between a dinner partly, and one wholly, cooked. In each of these cases the difference is, from one point of view, simply a distinction of quantity or degree. But, while it subsists, it is an all-important distinction, even though a little *more* would change the one term into the opposite. In the same way, vice does not cease to differ in nature, in quality, in essence, from virtue; and the distinction is no less valid or important; though we recognise—as all experience forces us to do—that more enlightenment, more comfort in his home, more objects of interest and of ambition, will change the idler and the profligate into the man of industry and sobriety.

This at least is Spinoza's point of view. All men can, he holds, be made good, because God has written "the idea of himself" so deeply on their hearts that they can never get away from this, his saving grace. That is to say, they cannot help seeking him in and through every object of desire; and therefore they cannot be content with falsehood or evil, but are ever striving after truth and happiness. It is for this reason that moral and social regeneration is possible,

namely, because God is already working in men's hearts through all their folly, their wretchedness, and their sin. Browning at the close of *Paracelsus* expresses Spinoza's thought in some beautiful lines :

In my own heart, love had not been made wise
To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
To see a good in evil, and a hope
In ill-success ; to sympathise, be proud
Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
Their prejudice, and fears, and cares, and doubts ;
All with a touch of nobleness, despite
Their error, upward tending all though weak,
Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
And do their best to climb and get to him ;
All this I knew not, and I failed.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE *LUMEN NATURALE*, OR THE IDEA OF GOD IN MAN.

IN a previous chapter we saw that God does not *directly* or *immediately* give moral laws to men. For moral laws, like political laws, are, by their very nature, capable of being either observed or violated. A moral law, or a civil law, which *cannot* be disobeyed is a contradiction in terms. But it is also a contradiction in terms that God should have imposed a law on man's nature which that nature is quite able to violate. All God's laws are eternal truths, and quite inviolable by the object or being on which they are imposed. As we saw, the laws imposed on a thing or being by God are just the nature, the power, or distinctive qualities of that thing. Hence, a man would only violate God's law for him if he could change himself into something else, *e.g.* into a horse, or a piece of metal, which does *not* act according to the laws of human nature. And this he cannot do.

Yet morality, as we showed in the last chapter, is not an accident of human existence. It is, in some sense, imbedded in human nature. The necessity for it, and for religion—Spinoza always treats *Religio* and *Pietas* (morality) as inseparable—is the deepest craving in man's being. Without this, man would no more be, than he would *be* without the power of eating, or without the power of thought. The necessity of being a moral being *as distinguished from a non-moral one*, is a necessity which no one makes, but one which he finds.

If, then, God has not put it within any man's power to be a moral, or a non-moral, being at his own option ; but only

to be, as a moral being, good or bad; why does Spinoza object to say that moral laws are the laws which God has, like a king, or legislator, or judge, laid down for men's guidance, and to which he has annexed certain rewards for the obedient, and certain penalties for the disobedient? He objects, because such a mode of speaking confuses two distinct ways in which God "gives gifts unto men"; and until we understand precisely *how* God gives man moral rules, and impels him to observe them, it is a very dangerous confusion of ideas, fertile in insoluble problems, and harmful to the moral life itself. When we do understand the way in which God really makes men good, there is no more objection to speaking of the moral laws as God's commands, and of men obeying and disobeying them, than there is to the use of any other popular phrase, such as, the sun is not shining to-day, or, this pen will not write, when we understand the facts which these expressions indicate. But until we have grasped the real state of the case, such popular statements are entirely misleading, if taken as literal and accurate statements of truth, taken, it should be added, as they were never meant to be taken.

In what way, then, does man become moral, and in what sense is morality a divine gift? In the same way as man becomes rational, and in the same sense as Reason or Thought is a divine gift to every man, though (or, shall we say, *because*) it imposes upon him infinite labour and pain to understand what 'spirit he is of.' Indeed, morality is just one of the forms in which human thought, *i.e.* God's thought in man, necessarily expresses itself. It is, therefore, subject to the same laws, it passes through the same succession of stages, it defines itself in the same gradual way in a more complete life, and it devises instruments more delicate and more complex as its task grows upon it, in precisely the same way as human thought does, in its effort to make itself at home in the world. For morality is just man trying to understand himself and his fellows, and how they can get the most out of one another. And moral rules are simply attempts to discover, and to define, the footing on which men will live together in the greatest harmony, that is, the footing

on which each will most feel that he is doing the best for himself, or attaining the most complete life open to him.

Why man can, nay must, undertake this task, and thus 'work out his own salvation,' is the point before us at present. Spinoza finds the explanation in the fact that man thinks. And to think is to have ideas. And all ideas are true in the sense that they all apply to, or are predicable of, reality; none are illusory or unreal, though we may combine, or separate, them in ways which, owing to absence of knowledge in us, nothing in the nature of the ideas necessitates. But "all ideas in so far as they are referred to God," that is, in so far as we know them, or give them a definite place in the real world, "are true." Their falsity is the indefiniteness, or defect, of knowledge which allows us to think them anyhow and in any connection. I may say that I know what a soul is, and that I also know what a square is; but if I say that I also know what a 'square soul' is, I show, by my freedom of putting these two ideas together in this way, that I do not really know the nature of either of the ideas; if I did I could not thus relate them.

Further, to have a true idea is *céritude*. To know is to know that we know. We can no more ask a criterion of truth, than we can ask where we shall find the end of space. Truth is its own criterion. A true idea, or knowledge, is self-evidencing. To doubt of any idea once it is referred to a definite place in the universe is impossible. Much more, to doubt of knowledge itself is absurd. Scepticism, if it is to be consistent with itself, must be mute.¹

Thus man has not only a true idea, *i.e.* knows something. He also has an idea of the truth, and in some sense knows everything, nor can he be satisfied till this outline is filled in. Spinoza believes that the mind is all that it can know. Hence a single idea, once grasped, drags the whole universe of thought after it. This indeed is a necessity of the case; for no idea, he holds, is true, until it has been referred to God, or has taken a definite place and setting in thought, so that we cannot think it in any connection we please, but *must* think it through its own peculiar nature. "If any one says that

¹ All these ideas are worked out in the *Tract. de Intell. Emend.*

Peter, for example, exists ; and yet does not know that Peter exists ; that thought is, relatively to him, false, or, if you prefer the phrase, not true ; even although Peter does really exist. Nor is the assertion, Peter exists, true, except in relation to him who knows assuredly that Peter does exist" (*De Intell. Emend.*).

To know one thing assuredly, is to be convinced not only of a truth, but of the truth. For nothing can either be, or be conceived, save in and through God, who is the truth, the reality within which all partial truths fall. Erdmann, in his account of Spinoza's philosophy, refers to a specific passage in the *Short Treatise* in which the love of truth is identified with the love of God. The reference is misleading in its conscientious accuracy. Where does Spinoza *not* say, and assume, that God is the truth, and the whole truth? But where does he say that the love of God is, as Erdmann contends, the love of truth as contrasted with the love of goodness and virtue? "If Spinoza's nature was purely speculative to an extent that is probably unique," it was only speculative in the sense that he spared no pains to know the truth regarding human nature, and its place in the cosmos, to the end that he might reveal wherein man's happiness and goodness consist. And it was only because the perfecting of the intelligence is essential to the realisation of this most practical end, that is to say, because a man cannot love the good unless he knows it, that he was interested in speculative problems at all.

Thus even to conceive God as non-existent, or as deceiving us with merely apparent knowledge, is impossible. To doubt of that would be to doubt of knowledge itself (including our own statement) ; for all knowledge, however fragmentary or embryonic, is knowledge of, and through, God. One true idea, or judgment, involves the "concatenation and connexion" of all other ideas within this immanent unity. That Philosophers have not, in general, recognised the fact, that what they set out to seek and to prove, namely the existence of God, was already present in the very simplest assertion from which they started, Spinoza holds to be the cause of the little success they attained.

They said, Lo! here, and Lo! there, when he was very 'nigh them, in their mouth and in their heart.' "The divine nature they should have set in the forefront of everything; because it is first, both in knowledge and in nature. Instead of this, they have regarded it as last in the order of knowledge; and have put in the forefront of all, the things which are called objects of the senses. In this way it has come about that while they were studying the objects in nature, they left the divine nature entirely out of account; and then, when they afterwards came to contemplate the divine nature, there was nothing less fitted to afford them a knowledge of the divine nature than the first fictitious notions on which they had built up a knowledge of natural things. And thus it is no wonder if they have everywhere involved themselves in contradictions" (II. 10, Schol.).

The recognition that God is the beginning, as well as the end, of all man's thought and endeavour, that a single fact is known only through the whole universe, and that the mind which has one true idea cannot be satisfied short of complete knowledge,—this is the atmosphere of Spinoza's thought. The practical implications of it he brings out in a passage in the *Tract. Theol.-Pol.* (Ch. 4) :

"As the intelligence is our better part, it is certain that, if we would really seek our welfare, we must try, above all, to raise it to the highest perfection; for in its perfection our highest good must consist. Moreover, as all our knowledge and the certitude which truly destroys all doubt, depends solely on the knowledge of God; both because, apart from God nothing can be or be conceived, and also because everything may be doubted by us so long as we have not a clear and distinct idea of God; it follows that our highest good and perfection depends solely on the knowledge of God. Again, as nothing can either be or be conceived apart from God, it is certain that everything in Nature involves, and expresses, the notion of God in proportion to its essence and its perfection; and thus, that we gain a greater and more perfect knowledge of God the better we know natural objects." "As then, the love of God is man's highest felicity and blessedness, and the last end and aim of all human actions, it follows that he alone observes the divine law who is zealous to love God, not from fear of punishment, nor out of love to some other thing, such as pleasure, fame, etc., but from this alone, that he knows God, or knows that the knowledge and love of God is the *summum*

bonum. . . . This, the idea of God dictates to us, namely, that God is our *summum bonum*, or that the knowledge and love of God is the last end to which all our actions should be directed" (*Ibid.*).

Thus, the sum and highest precept of this divine law is, to love God as our highest good. And it is a law for, or the highest happiness of, all men because it is God's idea of himself which is inscribed on, or is the beginning and the end of all our thought and desire. "The divine law which renders men truly blessed, and teaches the true life, is universal for all men; yea, we have so deduced it from human nature, that it should be regarded as innate in, and, so to speak, inscribed on, the human mind" (*Ibid.*, Ch. 5). That is to say, whoever would find what all men are seeking, will find it in complete measure only in this; for this is the nature of human existence. An individual life may, or it may not, attain to such a supreme satisfaction; but, at least, it cannot find it anywhere else than along these lines, and in such a disinterested devotion to the most complete object of desire. This is, again, a law of man's nature, or the condition of its exercising its powers in their highest perfection and reach. The end of man's striving and struggling to be, to know, to get, and to enjoy, is no more within his own option than his birth was. If he is to find happiness at all, he *must* find it in the knowledge and love of God, that is in the knowledge and love of all things and beings through God. Spinoza does not say, does not indeed believe, that all men must, or do, find such happiness. This would in fact be a contradiction. You cannot make men blessed. "No one can be compelled by force, or by laws, to become blessed; for this, there is required good moral and brotherly counsel, good education, and above all, the fostering of one's own free judgment" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 7).

Thus what God has done for man, or the laws which he has imposed on human nature, are: (1) the impulse of each individual nature to seek its own good, or happiness, so far as it knows it; (2) the constant dissatisfaction with anything short of complete knowledge of truth, and complete harmony and perfection of life. No man has the power to say, I will not seek what seems to me best, or, I will not believe what

seems to me true. And no man has the power to say, I will be happy when, and how, and through whatever objects, I choose. Within these inviolable limits of existence, a man may know the truth, or the good, more or less, he may become more or less blessed, he may lead a life more or less useful to himself and his fellows ; but he cannot say, I will believe a lie, I will be happy amid vice, and envy, and ambition. His happiness and his unhappiness depend on the use he makes of the powers which these 'laws of life' confer upon him ; that is, on the measure in which he recognises the limits, and necessary conditions, of his existence, limits which, when they are recognised, become his freedom ; and, when they are unrecognised, constitute his punishment.

One consequence of this is, that the results of virtue and of vice are not rewards and penalties externally attached to them by human laws, or even by God. One reason why men are so little in love with goodness is, that they suppose they can cheat the law which puts a premium on virtue ; and the cleverness needed to do this, either in the case of a divine, or of a human, law, only makes success more admirable. Spinoza's reply to this is, the consequences of virtue and of vice are *never* eluded. These are not penalties and rewards which can, by any human device or cleverness, be separated from the deeds themselves. God has given them a firmer grip on life than that. The rewards of virtue *are* virtue itself. The penalties of evil are evil itself. This is God's judgment, immanent, eternal, infallible, following inevitably from the human nature he has made. It is therefore by no caprice of human, or divine, legislation that goodness is rewarded with blessing, and badness with punishment. It is the very nature of goodness to make men blessed, and of evil to make them wretched. To change this is in no one's power. The individual will cannot. Human law cannot. Divine law cannot, if it is to be the law for *men*, for this is an essential condition of human nature. What human laws do, therefore, is not to settle that certain actions shall be called good, and shall have certain sanctions or inducements attached to them to make men

choose these rather than the opposite actions; but simply to recognise that a certain kind, or mode, of conduct is the truth of each man's life, in the sense that each man will make the most of himself only in this way. All civil rewards and punishments are simply the discipline by which men are taught that this, and not the opposite, mode of conduct is the "eternal truth" of human existence. Human law no more *makes* or *creates* moral distinctions, and the happiness and unhappiness which they necessarily produce, or constitute, than it makes reason or religion. It is the child, the creation of these, not their source. God made man so that his happiness was in his own hands, if only he would recognise the conditions and the nature of that happiness itself.

This involves that, at every stage of human history, man has known God with more or less clearness; and has understood with more or less adequacy the conditions and nature of the true life. At no time did God leave himself without a witness, not merely in the sense that some gifted soul has in every age had a vision of him, but also in the sense that this prophetic vision has been simply a clearer revelation of that consciousness of God, which was already struggling in every human heart to which the prophet's message came. Religion is as innate and ineradicable as thought. For we can know nothing without knowing God; and the knowledge of anything is the knowledge of God. Hence, Spinoza holds that we go far astray when we contrast natural knowledge with divine knowledge, reason with revelation, God's justice with man's. For how do we exalt one of God's gifts to us by disparaging another? Is natural knowledge, the power to think and reason, to create laws and social institutions, not God's gift to man? Is this not revelation, self-communication of power, divine power? Or are these *merely human* endowments, with the existence and development of which God has nothing to do? Spinoza's greatest message is, that there is nothing *merely human* as contrasted with Divine, except ignorance. What we call 'natural light,' 'Reason,' 'Thought,' is not only divine, but is the source of all religion, and the basis on which all other forms of God's revelation must be built. This *is* God's revelation of himself in man,

the only standard we have, or can have, for judging any message to be God's message.

"Those things which we know by Natural Light depend solely on the knowledge of God, and his eternal decrees. But because this natural knowledge is common to all men, seeing that it depends on fundamental ideas present in all men, it is not taken much account of by the popular mind. The popular consciousness is always thirsting after rarities, and things foreign to its own nature, and despises natural gifts ; and therefore when it speaks of prophetic knowledge, it wishes this natural knowledge excluded. Yet this can be called divine with as much right as any other knowledge whatever ; seeing that it is God's nature in so far as we participate in it, and God's decrees, which reveal it to us. Nor does it differ from that knowledge which all call divine, except in the fact that it is of less compass, and that the laws of human nature considered in themselves cannot be the cause of the other. But in respect of the certitude which natural knowledge involves, and in respect of the source from which it is derived (viz. God), natural knowledge is in nowise inferior to prophetic" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 1).

Not only is it not inferior : it is the only faculty we have for knowing what is a true revelation of God, and what is not. The Prophets were inspired, the Evangelists were inspired ; but those to whom they spoke, for whom they wrote, who handed down their words, were not inspired in the same way. Yet it was the latter who had to decide by the best light God had given them who, among all the Prophets who claimed to speak in the name of the Lord, were true prophets, and who 'spoke lies in the name of the Lord.' It was the latter who had to decide, who were preaching a true gospel, and who a false one. And they made this decision, just by those powers of discernment, and moral perception, which God had given them. Hence to cast doubt on the power of reason is to taint all religion and revelation at its source. "I cannot sufficiently marvel," says Spinoza, "that men wish to subject Reason, our greatest gift, and the divine light in us, to dead letters, which might even be corrupted by human wickedness ; and that it is considered no crime to speak disparagingly of the Mind, the true record (*syngraphum*) of God's word, and to hold it to be corrupt, blind, and ruined ; while it is considered the greatest crime to think such things about the letter and the image of

God's word. They think it pious to put no faith in Reason, and one's own judgment; but impious to doubt of the good-faith of those who have handed down to us the books of Scripture. This surely is mere foolishness, and not piety" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 15).

It is, therefore, in and through man's Mind, thought, reason, that he is either religious or moral. This is proved, positively, by the fact that all who can think are moral and religious; and negatively, by the fact that they alone are so. Religion is a function or power of human nature alone, that is to say, it is a revelation of God which takes place only in and through man's thought or consciousness. It aims only at and determines "man's welfare, not that of the universe as a whole" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). Without a human mind, there would be no such phenomenon as religion; for God expresses, or reveals, himself in this form in, and to, no other creature. Even the highest outpourings of the religious spirit in the Prophets, and in Christ, were thoughts which could be preached to, and could be understood by, the common people who, though devoid of any special gift of intellect or inspiration, yet 'heard them gladly,' as things to which their own understandings responded. Indeed, it is this necessity of finding the warrant of, and the divine testimony to, the truth of his message, in the common mind of man, which keeps the Prophet sane, and prevents his 'divine madness' from passing into that religious uniqueness which is real madness. His message is not an ecstasy, or a transport, private and personal to himself; but a revelation to him of that 'eternal truth' which God has written, as Spinoza puts it, on the heart of every man, and to which therefore the hearts of all will answer, if it be presented in a form of words which they can grasp.

Thus, those who go about to depreciate man's natural understanding, and its power to judge of a divine revelation, are diligently sawing the branch on which they are sitting. If the natural understanding cannot know God's revelation, then they do not, and their hearers cannot. God, happily, has established religion so firmly that no one can think at all without seeking after him. The power to think, to under-

stand, to discern between the right hand and the left, to recognise our good and our bad, is the very meaning and source of religion. For we can do this only in virtue of our possession of that same divine power, and God-given energy, which enables us to make the highest truths of religion our own, and thereby to attain the only certitude of which any religious revelation admits. We cannot afford to make God's revelation to us an excuse for refusing to use resolutely that very power of discerning truth which is the essence of all revelation. God never does give any revelation to those who do not see that the mind's insatiable craving for knowledge, its questionings, its doubts, its longings, its refusal to be satisfied with half-knowledge, or with empty phrases, is just the torment of a soul which nothing but God, who is the truth, can satisfy. "Not only Reason itself, but also the teachings of the Prophets and Apostles openly proclaim, that the eternal word and covenant of God, and the true Religion, is divinely inscribed on the hearts of men, that is, on the human mind; and that this is the true record (*syngraphum*) of God, which he has written with his own pen, namely by the idea of himself, and, so to speak, with an image of his own divinity" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 12).

It is because man can no more help being a religious being, than he can help being a thinking being, that his one duty in life is the knowledge and love of God. Spinoza, however, interprets this in such a way that religion is, in his view, the source and the sanction of every other duty, intellectual and moral, but has itself no existence save in and through these. To put it in a sentence, man has, he holds, no duties to God other than the duties he has to himself and to other men. The meaning of religion, that is of the consciousness of God, is just the consecration of the ties that bind us to the world and to our fellow-men; the recognition that we can find our own good only as it is thus mediated for us; and the glad consciousness that the limits of life against which, in our ignorance, we rebelled are, when understood, the conditions of our happiness. The consciousness, or the idea, of God is the source of every-

thing that a man can know about himself and his good. For

"it is solely from the fact, that our mind contains in itself as its object, or idea, the nature of God, and shares in that nature ; that it has the power of forming certain notions, which explain the nature of things, and teach us how to make use of our life. Hence, we can properly maintain, that the nature of the mind, conceived as we have just described it, is the first cause of divine revelation ; for all those things which we clearly and distinctly understand are dictated to us by the idea (as just shown), and nature, of God, not in words it is true, but in a far more excellent way, and one which best agrees with the nature of the mind ; as every one who tested the certitude of the intelligence has undoubtedly personally experienced" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 1).

Thus, what Scripture aims at is, to bring out the truth of human nature, and to make men conscious of those relations in which their happiness is really to be found. This is its sole aim. And even this aim confines itself to making known those relations which most affect man's happiness. The "divine natural law," that is the law which God has made "Catholic," or universal, by making every human heart respond to its teaching when presented in a form suitable to it, is summed up in the precept, "Love God with all your soul and your neighbour as yourself." He who does this is blessed, whencesoever his knowledge of it may have been derived ; since this life *is* blessedness. For this end, it is not even essential to have true opinions about the course of nature, or God's relation to nature, or about God's nature from a speculative point of view. *Some* knowledge is indeed essential ; for no one can live such a life without believing that it is the best life for man ; and he who believes this, in the sense of living this life, knows God, or the truth, in the highest possible way, in that 'intuitive' way which is more certain than any mathematical demonstration, because it involves complete union of the mind with the object it knows.

Religion, however, is no substitute for the slow labour by which we attain truths of science and of philosophy. It is the inspiration of these, not the forestalling of them. But Religion's *chief* expression is in morality, because it is the individual's relations to other men which most affect

his happiness. Hence the highest form the knowledge of God can take is the knowledge of him as the source of Justice and Charity, or the knowledge of Justice and Love as the true and blessed life for men. This is the one end which all Scripture has in view, the thread of continuity and divine purpose in all its books. To show men that it is God's will for them that they shall live by righteousness, and perish by iniquity ; that Justice has a divine right to rule ; that Love alone is strong and eternal ; this is the sum of all religion, the primal principle out of which all other virtues, and true development of faculty, alone can come. He who knows, and lives this, has fulfilled the whole law, and enjoys blessedness, even if he believes that God sits on a throne, gets jealous and angry, grieved and repentant, that he made the sun to give man light, and the darkness to lull him to slumber. These mistaken opinions are not of *no* moment ; but, in comparison with what such a man does know about God as the source of all that makes men live in harmony, they are of no moment.

Hence he alone believes in, and serves God, who follows Justice and Charity toward men ; for these qualities or attributes are the highest revelation of himself which God has given to man. Nor does it matter much in what precise way men receive this revelation, whether it is because God is himself just and loving, or because he has so written the need of Justice and Love upon the nature of men, that they can recognise it as God's will or law for their happiness. For it is equally divine and binding upon them in either case. All that Faith requires is the belief that it is God's decree for man that it shall ever be well with the good, and ill with the bad.

Religion then, or the divine law, is summed up in the one principle, that there exists a supreme Being who loves Justice and Charity ; and whom all, if they are to be saved, are bound to obey, and to serve by the practice of Justice and Love toward their neighbour. From this principle (see *Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 14) there result such doctrines as these : (1) That there exists a God, or supreme Being, supremely just and merciful, or the exemplar of the true life. (2) That

there is no other object worthy of the same absolute devotion. . (3) That he is everywhere present, and all things are open to him. Without this men would doubt of the fairness of the Justice by which he directs all things. (4) That he has supreme right and dominion over all things; and is forced to action by nothing external to himself. (5) That the worship of God, and obedience to him, consist solely in Justice and Charity, or in Love toward one's neighbour. (6) That all who obey God by following this mode of life alone are saved; while those who live under the dominion of their inclinations are lost. (7) That God pardons the sins of those who repent.

In these statements Spinoza recognises that there is some accommodation to popular language. But he holds that if men are thereby led to see that the authority and right which belong to Justice and Love are of God, and through God; that is, that those are absolute and alone worthy of their highest devotion, such accommodation of language is not only excusable, but God's truth. For, as he points out, men have not been made so that they can all be wise; that is, can be scientists or philosophers, but they have been so made that they all *can* be made obedient, and can serve God as he reveals himself in Justice and in Love. By what opinions, through what language, by what means, men are led to this life of righteousness matters nothing. That they shall be led to live it, each man in his own way, and according to the opinions, foolish or wise, which each may hold, is what alone matters; for it is this life which constitutes their supreme blessedness. That is to say, it is the recognition of those relations toward their fellow-men, in which God has placed their happiness, as God's law for them, that is men's bliss.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SOCIAL AND THE CIVIL CONDITION.

(WE have already seen that, according to Spinoza, the life of a human being is necessarily social.) It cannot begin, and it cannot continue, save on this footing. But 'social' is not to be straightway identified with 'civil.' For there may be a condition of life which is social but not civil, not a very happy, or secure, or permanent, or high form of existence, but still a form of human existence in which there is no State, no ordered and effective system of law, no redress for injury, and no punishment, except those which the man himself, and those who sympathise with him, can command. Thus the State is not the first, nor the sole, form in which man's social nature reveals itself.

But there is another idea which runs through Spinoza's whole theory of Politics, viz. that the State, great and important as its place is in the world, is not the end, or highest expression, of man's social nature, any more than it is the first, or lowest, expression of it. Nay further, that instead of the existence of the State being a proof, that man is wholly a social being, it is quite as much a proof of the opposite. (If men were naturally social, there would be no State;) and if they ever became completely socialised, there would be no State either. In the one case it would never have been born; and in the other, it would have ceased to be needed. For what is a State? It is a society living under laws, which define, and maintain against aggression, certain specific rights belonging to individuals as citizens, or to the society as a whole. To define these, without main-

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taining and enforcing them, is to abrogate the functions of a State. To make a law, and not see that it is observed, is worse than making no law at all. But a law is not a law, unless there is force behind it in the form of penalty. And penalty is the ever-present reminder, that some men will not do the right and just thing, unless there is some such negative inducement; and perhaps even the reminder, that *no* man can be absolutely trusted to do the right thing under all conditions. It is the evidence that men are not social; but are only in process of becoming more and more social; and require, therefore, to protect themselves against themselves, as well as to protect themselves against others.

"If men had been so constituted by Nature, that they desired nothing save that which true Reason teaches them, a society would assuredly need no laws; it would be quite sufficient to teach men true moral principles, and they would spontaneously *integro et liberali animo* do that which is for their true welfare" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 5). It is the fact that men have not been so constituted to begin with, that makes necessary a *Societas* which is also an *Imperium* or a *Civitas*. "Law is laid down only for those who are deficient in Reason, and in the teachings of the natural intelligence." "The faithful need no law." And "if human nature had been so fashioned that men most desired that which is most for their welfare, no devices would be required for making men live in harmony and mutual trust; but as it is evident that human nature has been constituted in a very different way, the State should necessarily be so arranged that all, rulers as well as ruled, may, *volens volens*, do that which the common safety requires" (*Tract. Pol.*, VI. 3).

Spinoza's point is, that if men had been so constituted that such a direct appeal to the individual's reason as the moral teacher makes, or to his conscience as the preacher makes, was sufficient to produce belief in right and just conduct as their good, then the State with its laws, sanctions, penalties would never have come into existence, or could not continue in existence; since the work it is called into existence to do would be already done. Force will lose the moral sanction which it has in the hands of the State, when morality comes to its own in men, but not till then. For force is a moral instrument, when it subserves a moral end; and this it does do as wielded by the organised common life. It will cease to be a moral instrument, only when men are

moral without it, that is, when they will the good because it is good, and not because some external penalty has been attached to the willing of the bad.

The end of the State is, to Spinoza, to make men free, that is to say, to make them live according to Reason. But the State can do this only by laying down certain courses of conduct and enforcing them. The individual may 'consent to the law that it is good,' that is, good for him as well as for others; or he may not. In either case, he must obey, or submit to the penalties that disobedience brings. For the State can take account only of outward actions, and their conformity or non-conformity to the type of action which it strives to make universal. Hence, the individual who is not enlightened enough, that is, sufficiently moral, to recognise the goodness of the end for which the law, and also the State, exists, feels the law a yoke or burden imposed upon him, not for his own good, but for the benefit of some one else, either ruler or fellow-citizen. This is why the law is regarded as a taskmaster, a government of one's life from without, something which one has to *obey*. If each were moral enough, or, what is the same thing, rational enough, to recognise that the law and the State were simply aiming at making him do, by outward inducements, that which, if he understood his own happiness, he would be most eager to do without any outward inducement, he would cease to speak of *obeying* the law, and of *must*, and of *obligation*; and he would speak, instead, of liberty, happiness, and the love of man. But, until this comes about, law and obligation and force must keep their hold over him, for these are the guardian of the better life for all except those who love the law, and keep it not from fear of its penalties, but from devotion to its end. For those who have not reached this stage of *libertas animi*, of which after all the *libertas civilis* is but a foreshadowing, the State and the law, duty, imperative, obligation, obedience, *are* the moral end. As yet, they cannot see beyond this, nor will the good for its own sake; but in obeying the law they will a good better than the law itself, though the full reason or cause of their obedience is not yet distinctly known to them. In obeying the law, and even in

being made to obey it, they participate in that very end or good for which all laws exist.

"By a law is commonly meant, a command which men may either carry out or neglect ; since a law restrains human power within certain limits narrower than those to which that power extends, and does not command anything beyond men's powers. Thus a more precise definition of a law would be, a rule of conduct which a man prescribes to himself, or to others, with a view to a certain end. [But the true end of the laws is generally recognised only by a few, most men being little fitted to discern it, and guiding their lives by anything but Reason.] Hence legislators, that they might be able to control all men equally, have wisely laid down another end very different from that which follows necessarily from the nature of the laws. That is to say, they promise to those who observe the laws, what men in general most love, and threaten those who violate the laws with what people most fear. In this way they have tried to control the populace, as far as they could, as we do a horse with a bridle. And this explains why a law has come to be regarded, in the main, as a rule of conduct which is prescribed to men *ex imperio aliorum*. It explains also, why those who obey the laws are said to be subject to law, and seem to be servants (*servire*). And in truth, he who gives every man his own because he fears the yoke, does act *ex alterius imperio*, and under the compulsion of an evil, and cannot be called just. But he who gives every man his own, because he recognises the true end of the laws, and the necessity of them, acts with a steadfast spirit, according to his own decision, and not according to that of another ; and thus *he* is rightly called a just man" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 4).

Thus only he who wills the right, and the just, life for itself is free from the law, while those who do not will this, the end of all law, can be free only through *obedience* to the law. Yet laws are successful in proportion as they make themselves useless, by so training men to do the good action, before they know why it is good, that they will learn to know it as their good, and to do it out of love of it, and not because it is commanded.

But Spinoza's contention is, that no one does, or can, will this good at first except in the form of law and under the constraint of law. Man is not an animal who is naturally moral or social ; but a being who has had to fight, and think, his way step by step by slow, and painful, and bloody, stages to the measure of morality and of sociality which he has attained. } His morality and social life are not

unnatural ; in a true sense they are his birthright. But he must purchase this birthright at a great price, for it exists at all as, and only in the measure in which, he thinks and wills it. God gives him sociality and morality only in this form, and under these conditions ; that is to say, his morality is the measure in which he understands himself, and the nature of his welfare ; and his sociality is but the reflection of the degree of moral perfection he has attained. We may express Spinoza's thought if we say, that a completely socialised existence is God's law or will for man, in the sense, that God has so made him that this alone will constitute a perfect happiness for any one, while each man will be unhappy, and incomplete, in the measure in which he falls short of this. But it is not God's law for men in the sense that they are, or can be, thus truly social at the beginning. It is not in the power of any individual or community to say, Go to, I will henceforth be morally, or socially, perfect. For such a resolution is merely verbal, until the content, or real nature, of such a life has been actually thought out and willed. In this sense, "it is no more in a man's power to have a sound mind, than to have a sound body." He cannot by mere volition think truly, know the good and desire it, for thought which has not gone through the labour of grappling with, and making its own, the nature and conditions of truth ; and a good which is not made concrete by embodiment in social conditions of life, has no real worth or power. A healthy body is in great measure within our reach, if we will use the proper means, positive and negative, which conduce to health. And a sound mind, that is, a mind which sees the good and desires it, is also within our reach in the measure in which we are resolute to think out, and to will, *all* the conditions in ourselves and in others which go to create, and to sustain, its resolutions. But, without this process, and the observance of these conditions, a good will is no more attainable by us than a good condition of health.

It is because a State, or organised social life, is one of the essential conditions through which morality, or the good will, is alone attainable, that Spinoza values it. It is to him the chief moral agency in the world, that, without which, all other

moral efforts would be ineffective and barren of result. Yet it is not itself moral; partly, because it is, from first to last, relative to an end beyond itself, namely the production of a certain type of character in those who constitute it, and so, the better it does its work, the more can it be dispensed with; but partly also, because it can work only on, and through, outward actions, for "*simplicitas* and *sinceritas* of soul are not produced in men by *imperio legum*, nor by public authority."

Hence it is the growing sense of a moral and social nature which brings the State into being; but it is the immoral and anti-social tendencies in each man which make the State necessary. We must bear in mind both these points if we are to understand Spinoza's treatment of the Civil Order.

It is because men are not born rational, moral, religious, or social, that the State is needed, and its highest end is to make them so. All that they are born with, is the power of thinking, with more or less adequacy, the conditions of their own existence, and of striving after the best they do know. From this fundamental fact our enquiry must start. The origin of the State must be sought not in the developed Reason of mankind, but in the primary emotions by which all men, whether wise or foolish, are stirred. A Society with definite and recognised ways of acting, and with force to make these observed, is a necessity (1) because he who is ruled by his passions does not know what is good for himself, and just as little what is good for others; and (2) because, so long as he does not know this, he is necessarily brought into disharmony with his own welfare, and into collision with the desires and actions of others.

"All men are indeed seeking their own welfare, but by no means according to the dictate of sound Reason. Indeed for the most part they desire things, and judge them to be for their advantage, solely from inclination, and under the ruling influence of emotions which take no account of the future and of any other objects of desire. Hence no *societas* can subsist except organised as an *imperium* and based on force, nor consequently can it *maintain* itself without laws which shall control and restrain the natural inclination and unbridled violence of men" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 5). "Those who have had experience of how changeable the temper of the people is, are almost in despair. For the populace is governed not by Reason, but only by their emotions. It is headlong in everything, and is

very easily corrupted both by avarice and by luxury. Each man thinks that he alone knows everything, and wishes all things to be arranged according to his mind. Each thinks a thing to be just or unjust, lawful and unlawful, in so far as it will, in his judgment, bring him gain or loss. Ambition makes him despise his equals, and does not suffer him to submit to their control. Envy of the praise received by a better man, or of another's good fortune—fortune never being equal—makes him desire that some misfortune befall him, and makes him rejoice in it when it does" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 17).

Moreover, as there is nothing which so much affects a man for good or ill, as the kind of relations in which he stands to other men, those who are thus the slave of their passions necessarily spend most unhappy lives. For while men's dangers from the lower animals may in some cases be great; and the dangers and discomforts due to the physical world may always make prudence and forethought of the highest importance; yet, neither of these, nor yet both of them in combination, awaken in men half the apprehension which other men do. Their danger from this side is far more serious, enduring, and subtle than it ever can be from any other. Men, moreover, who are swayed only by their passions (as we saw in Ch. 8) necessarily come into collision. "In the state of Nature men are one another's enemies"; for, where there is no standard of right, and no regulation of conduct, there can be no stable ties of friendship or interest. "Men are all the more to be feared the more powerful they are, and the more they surpass the other animals in cleverness and cunning. But men are in the highest degree subject to emotions of anger, envy, and hatred. Hence they are by nature enemies. For he is my greatest enemy whom I have most reason to fear, and against whom I have to be most on my guard" (*Theol.-Pol.*, II. 14).

It is for this reason that the *status naturalis*, while it is the first state of human existence, is not the last. For there is no one who does not find it an impossible existence. "There is no one who does wish to live, as far as possible, in security and without fear; and this cannot possibly happen, so long as each man is allowed to do whatever he pleases, and so long as no more right is conceded to Reason than to hatred and anger. For there is no one who does not spend

his life anxiously amid enmity, hatred, anger, and guile. And so there is no one who does not try to escape them, as far as possible" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). "In the *status naturalis* every one lives as he lists, but in great peril of his life" (*Tract. Pol.*, v. 2).

This means that every man necessarily seeks to assert himself, and to make his life as little subservient to another's will as he can. Each seeks to be his own master (*sui juris*), and to use all the rest as the instruments of his purposes. But if each man's security depends upon himself alone, there is no security at all, nothing indeed save universal fear. And "each is the less his own master the more cause he has for fear." On this basis the *Jus Naturae* of the individual, instead of bringing him to his happiness, would be consumed in fruitless struggles with his fellows. "In the *status naturalis* each man is his own master so long as he is able to guard against oppression by another. But it will be in vain for a single man to endeavour to protect himself against all. Hence, so long as human Natural Right is determined by the power of each man, and belongs to each, so long will there be none at all. It will exist, rather in theory than in fact; seeing that there is no security for maintaining it. And it is certain that each man has so much the less power, and therefore so much the less right, the greater occasion he has for fear" (*Tract. Pol.*, II. 15).

Men recognise that this is a condition of life in which everybody stands to lose. They recognise it all the more readily that there are in them, from the first, passions and desires which link them with, and make them dependent on, others. At no time is a "war of all against all" possible for men. Spinoza points out many such cravings and wants which make a social life inevitable for man.

"The fear of solitude is present in all men; for no one has, in a state of solitude, the powers needful for his defence, and for procuring the necessities of life. Hence, men do by nature desire the *status civilis*" (*Tract. Pol.*, vi. 1). "In spite of the mutual jealousies of men, they can hardly endure a solitary life. For this reason, the definition of man as a social animal has been very generally accepted. And it is the case, that from the common social life of men many more advantages than

disadvantages arise. Let Satyrists, therefore, make sport of human affairs as much as they will, let Theologians denounce them, and let Melancholics praise, as much as they please, the life uncultured and rude, and let them despise men and admire the brutes. Yet will they learn from experience, that men much more readily procure for themselves by mutual help those things of which they stand in need; and that they cannot escape the dangers which everywhere threaten them except by joining their forces" (iv. 35, Schol.). "*Societas* is of the highest utility not only for securing one's life against enemies, but also for making the accomplishment of many things easier. Indeed it is in the highest degree necessary. For unless men are willing to afford one another assistance, both the skill and the time required for supplying their needs, and for preserving themselves, would be wanting to them. For all men are not equally well fitted for everything; nor would any man be sufficient to himself for securing those things of which even a man in solitude has the utmost need. The strength and the time would, I say, be wanting to any one man, if he had to do his own ploughing, sowing, reaping, etc., and all the manifold things which the sustenance of our life requires. To say nothing at present of the arts and sciences, which are also supremely necessary for the perfection of human nature, and its happiness" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 5). "Men would, without mutual help, necessarily spend their lives in the utmost wretchedness and without the development of Reason" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). "Men are united by their need of one another." "A man in the *Status Naturalis* cannot guard against oppression by another, handicapped as he is by daily sleep, often by sickness, or by infirmity of soul, and at last by old age" (*Tract. Pol.*, III. 11).

Spinoza also gives the obverse of this in other places in which he points out the positive advantages which a settled social order confers upon each individual.

"Many," he tells us in the *Ethics* (Part 4, Append., § 13), "from too great impatience of spirit, and out of a false zeal for Religion, have exchanged the society of men for that of the brutes. In so acting, they behave just like boys and youths, who cannot patiently endure the scoldings of their parents, but rush to enlist as soldiers. Thus they prefer the discomforts of war and the arbitrary rule of a despot, to the comforts of home and the admonitions of a father; and they will endure any imposition however onerous, if only they can be revenged on their parents." "If two men agree together, and unite their forces, they have together more power, and consequently more right over Nature, than either has alone; and the more men there are, who are thus united by their need of one another, the more right will they have as one body" (*Tract. Pol.*, II. 13). "For living with security, and to the best advantage (of time), men have had necessarily to unite together." The *Jus Naturae*,

which is characteristic of the human race, can scarcely be conceived, except where men live under common civil laws, and are able to vindicate for themselves the territory which they inhabit and cultivate, and have the power to protect themselves, to repel all aggression, and to live after the common judgment of all. For the more men there are, who thus unite into one body, the more right do they all have as a whole. And if it was on this ground, viz. that men in the *status naturalis* can hardly be *swi juris*, that the Scholastics spoke of man as a *social animal*, I see no reason for taking exception to their phrase" (*Tract. Pol.*, II. 15).

Further, it can be shown, and experience itself teaches men more and more, that the strongest man, the man, that is to say, who is most his own master, is always the man who is most ruled by Reason. For "human power, and therefore right, consists mainly, not in physical strength, but in a spirit dauntless and high endowed." So that, even in a state of Nature, that man "is the most powerful, and most a law to himself, who is most guided by Reason." This is so, both because, such a man can get others to unite with him much more readily than can a man who is governed by a ruling passion; and also, because such a man knows better what he wants, and understands more clearly how to attain and to maintain it. No one can doubt that it is of much more advantage to men to live in accordance with the laws and sure dictates of our Reason. For Reason has regard only to the true welfare of men" (*Theol. Pol.*, Ch. 16). Hence, if men understood what was really for their advantage, they would always act according to the guidance of Reason, and would maintain those conditions of harmonious life, which man's rational nature dictates to him as best for all. But this is 'too good to be true,' at this stage of life. "If all men could be readily guided by Reason alone, and could appreciate the supreme *utilitas et necessitas* of the State, there would be no one who would not utterly detest guile, and all would sacredly observe every promise with the utmost fidelity out of a desire for this supreme good, viz. the preservation of the State; and above all, every one would act with loyalty, that loyalty which is the State's best defence. But it is far from being true, that men can, at all times, be easily led by the guidance of Reason alone; since each man is carried away by his own desire, and the Mind is

very often so filled with avarice, ambition, anger, envy, etc., that Reason finds no place" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). "It is not in the power of the individual man always to make use of Reason and to be at the highest point of human freedom" (*Tract. Pol.*, II. 8). That is to say, no man can trust his own thought always to be, to know, and to do the best under all conditions. His wisdom is often lamentably at fault. He is carried away in a moment of anger to say, or do, what the tears and the pain of a life-time will not atone for. He cannot trust himself to be always alert, quick-witted, far-seeing, steadfast, patient, in the enjoyment of good health. He cannot think so well, act so well, or be so 'good,' when he is tired, sleepy, sick, vexed, hungry, etc. The recognition of these plain facts and conditions of human life, and thought, and will, Spinoza is always insisting on. And this is what he means when he says that the individual man *cannot*, just because of these very weaknesses in him, because of the necessary ebb and flow of his energies, as well as because of his necessarily defective knowledge at any stage of his existence, always hope to act rationally, or to do the 'best' for himself, or (what is equivalent) to be truly *free*.

But man's prerogative, and the source of all his strength, is, that he can *know* his weakness; and by knowing it, can provide against it and its consequences; and can even turn his weakness and the limitation of his powers into the strongest force in the world. Spinoza had already proved that to be true of man which Wordsworth says of the 'Happy Warrior,'

Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,
And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train !
Turns his necessity to glorious gain ;
In face of these doth exercise a power
Which is our human nature's highest dower ;
Controls them and subdues, transmutes, bereaves
Of their bad influence, and their good receives.

That is to say, a man cannot be always awake; and he cannot be so active, and provident for his safety and sustenance, when asleep, as he is when awake; and he cannot be so far-seeing when he has little experience of men and things as

when he has much ; and he cannot be always young, or equally placid, or strong of purpose, or free from fear and enmity. But he can *know* these facts. He can recognise the nature of his existence, and the conditions which these 'lines of weakness' impose upon him. If he cannot himself be always awake, or young, or provident ; he can *think* this, and devise the requisite means for guarding against its results. He can make it some one's interest to keep awake, and look to his safety, while he himself is asleep. He can form ties of common friendship, kindness, sympathy, and love which will ensure him against the worst dangers to which his own sickness, ignorance, inconstancy, or quick temper expose him. If he cannot do all the 'hundred and one' things needful for his own subsistence and comfort, he can, in virtue of his consciousness of this personal inability, provide against his own 'insufficiency to himself' by making it somebody's interest to supply him with what he needs. And the fact that he cannot make it anybody's interest to furnish him with what he needs, unless the interest is made mutual in some form, is simply one of the 'necessary conditions' of a human existence at any stage. Men may understand this condition with more, or with less, adequacy and truth ; but it is always present. It is one of the elements in human welfare which cannot be thought away, or left out of account.

Thus man's power to think the conditions of his own existence is the explanation of all social relations. However far back we go in human history, and however animal the need which craves for satisfaction in the individual, we are still encompassed by thought. Every human desire is a desire for the good, or advantage, which the individual's own judgment regards as the best at the moment. But the judgment of the moment is no less a judgment on the man's welfare as a whole. We always know that we want, and shall want in the future a great many things which we shall have to wait for, to work for, to plan and devise the proper instruments and conditions through which alone what we want can be gained and kept. This law of life, that man's thought 'besets him behind and before,' is no less true in

the simplest and rudest condition in which human beings can exist, than it is in a highly-developed civil community ; for these two are just different stages of thought, the less adequate necessarily becoming more adequate, the narrow and limited conception of human welfare necessarily evolving into a more complete one. This power of thinking, or judging, the State does not make. On the contrary, the State is called into being by it, to serve it, to support it, to be the instrument of its development, and the agent of its purposes. The Civil Order is indeed *the* instrument among instruments, without which, and apart from which, nothing in thought or action or endeavour would have stability, power, or binding force ; but yet it is not self-created. Its origin is no more mysterious than the origin of tools, or of speech, or any of the other fundamental forms in which thought has found, or has made, a vehicle for its own further development.

Spinoza always maintains that the Civil Order is the creation, the conscious and deliberate creation, of man's thought and endeavour. It came into being because men recognised that each of them would gain far more than he would lose by having settled customs, laws, modes of conduct, and forms of rule which would be equally binding on all. There is a slight difference between the statements in the *Tract. Theol.-Pol.* on this point and those in the *Tract. Pol.* In the former, the place of Reason, and the idea of a definite and deliberate agreement, or covenant (after the pattern of the Hebrew covenant), are much more prominent ; while in the latter, the idea of a deliberate agreement practically disappears, and it is recognised that it is some common emotion, rather than Reason itself, which first leads men to unite their forces. "Because men, as we have said, are led more by Emotion than by Reason, it follows that it is not by the leading of Reason, but from some general emotion, that a people naturally agrees, and consents to be led, so to speak, by one mind, viz. either from a common hope, or fear, or the desire of avenging some common loss" (*Tract. Pol.*, VI. 1). This marks a natural development of Spinoza's thought in two directions which deserve mention.

(1) He recognises that there are other States than free States ; and that, therefore, the right of rule cannot depend on a prior consent, or covenant, on the part of each individual. In the *Political Treatise* (v. 6) he points out that the State which he is analysing is a free State, and not one which is constituted by right of war. "For a free people is led more by hope than by fear, a conquered one more by fear than by hope. The one seeks to make the most of life, the other only to avoid death. The one, I say, tries to further its own interest ; the other is compelled to further that of the victor. For this reason we call the one enslaved, the other free. Hence the end of that political sovereignty which is gained by right of war is dominion (*dominari*), and to have slaves rather than subjects. And although between the political order fashioned by a free people and one obtained by right of war there is no essential difference, if we take account only of the right of each in general, yet their end, and also the means needful for maintaining each of them, are quite different." In other words, the general right which resides in the State as a whole is quite unaffected whether the governed have freely and deliberately given their consent to it or not. The kind of life which the State enjoys, or the end which it achieves, will indeed differ widely in the case of a free, self-governed nation, from that which is possible for a conquered one ; and so also will the means, or the motives, by which the obedience of the subjects in each case is secured. But the right of the ruler to command, and the duty of the subject to obey, or submit to the penalty of disobedience, is equally valid whether the State rest on force or on free consent. This right is the inherent virtue of any and every State, whatever the basis on which it stands.

This conclusion is but the logical consequence of Spinoza's leading principle, that right equals power. If a State, or ruler, has the power to issue commands, and to make them observed, it has the right, nay the duty, so to act. We shall afterwards see that this principle is neither so immoral nor so politically dangerous as it appears to be. But the point here is, that *how* a State has come into being matters

nothing so far as its right to command is concerned. If it gives security, peace, and settled order, it is equally entitled to demand obedience, whether it rest on conquest or on popular vote and agreement. When the Roman State ruthlessly crushed the little self-governing communities with which it came into contact, it was no less entitled to enforce obedience to its laws than if these laws had been the expression of the conquered people's own express agreement.

Spinoza puts this otherwise when he says that a State's right, while it is the sum of all the natural powers of the individuals within it, may come into existence, either by a *tacit*, or by an express, compact. "The transfer of the *Jus Naturale* from the individual to the community may be spontaneous, or under the compulsion of force." "All men must have agreed expressly, or *tacitly*, to obey in everything; seeing that they have transferred all their power, that is, all their right of self-defence, to Society. For if they had wanted to reserve anything, they would, at the same time, have had to take measures to maintain what they did reserve. But this they have not done, nor could they have done it without producing a dual authority within the State; and to do this, would have been to destroy the State. Hence they have submitted absolutely to the authority of the supreme power. And they have thus submitted, both under the compulsion of necessity and at the prompting of Reason" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16).

In other words, Spinoza holds that a man has a right to live outside of a settled society or State, if he wishes to do so, that is to say, if he thinks it is better for him, or more for his interest. But if he elect to do this, he has no right to complain of any aggression, wrong, injury, theft, etc., committed against him; for the man who does not live subject to law has no right to the protection and redress it affords. He cannot be *injured*, for where there is no law there cannot be injury. Nobody does him *wrong* if there is for him no recognised and enforced right. Nobody can *steal* from him who recognises no property protected by social sanctions. He may live free from the State, if he is content

with this helpless freedom. But he cannot go his own way if he would. For the State is bound by the essential condition of its own existence to treat every one who does not recognise its laws as an enemy. Its duty to its own citizens necessitates this. It has to defend their persons and their property, to be watchful for their interests, to anticipate and frustrate all violence that may be used against them. And it must therefore treat every man who lives *in* it without being *of* it, as its enemy, the thing against which it is its duty to guard. This does not involve any personal dislike or enmity; it is simply the natural consequence of the want of a common law. "An enemy is any one who lives apart from the State in such a way that he recognises the authority of the State neither as a subject nor as an ally. For it is not hatred, but *jus*, which makes a man the State's enemy. And the right of the State over him who does not recognise its rule by any kind of compact, is the same as it is over him who has injured it. It may lawfully compel him in any way open to it, either to become subject to it, or to form an alliance with it" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16).

In this way, it is clear that the State is a necessity of man's existence, simply because it affords a stronger, more advantageous, more secure life for every one. It makes a non-civil condition impossible by giving men a richer and freer existence than would be open to them in such a non-civil state. It accomplishes what every man wants, and succeeds where each man unaided would fail. Its necessity simply is, that no man can understand his own welfare without judging that a civil order of life is the primary condition of all other achievement, whether material, intellectual, or social. Hence, man everywhere has discovered or invented the State, just because man everywhere can think out the conditions under which a greater degree of peace and happiness would be attainable by him. "All men, whether barbarous or civilised, are everywhere united by social ties, and form some sort of *status civilis*" (*Tract. Pol.*, I. 7). "Men have been accustomed to live in a State." "Men have been so constituted that they cannot live without some sort of common law." "Men do by nature desire the *status*

civilis, nor is it possible for them ever entirely to dissolve it. Hence although discords and seditions are of frequent occurrence in the State; yet these never lead the citizens to dissolve the State, a fate which frequently overtakes every other form of association. All that men ever do is, to change it from one form of State into another—supposing, that is to say, that the strife cannot be settled without such a change of form" (*Tract. Pol.*, VI. 1-2).

Thus the State is a social compact, but one of a quite peculiar nature. For this compact is the condition of all other compacts, and does not derive its character from them. It may be tacit, as well as express. It may be based on force, and conquest, as well as on free consent. It is absolute in its terms, and indissoluble even by those who are parties to it. Such a compact is not the basis or beginning of the State, but the nature or intrinsic excellence of the State, as we shall see in the next chapter.

(2) One other point should be noted here, before we pass from this question, viz. that Spinoza holds that the relations between the rulers and the ruled in a State are not determined by any written or verbal agreement or bargain, but by their own intrinsic or essential nature. He believes that no king or ruler ever is elected without some stipulations or conditions, whereby he agrees to rule in accordance with certain laws, or customs, or for some particular end (*e.g.* the waging of a certain war). Yet he contends, that these conditions and stipulations are not absolutely binding upon, or valid for, the ruler under all circumstances; for cases may arise, in which it is not only lawful for him to transgress them, but in which it is his duty so to do. That is to say, the unity, strength, and security of the State may require the breaking of this very agreement and the violation of its terms in certain cases. And the security of the State is the end, the soul, of all other compacts. Spinoza's point is, therefore, that the verbal, or written, agreement between rulers and subjects is not the real 'social compact,' but only a more or less adequate image of it. The *State* is the social compact; and whatever, in the judgment of the ruler, is for the welfare of the whole State, or necessary for its safety,

that it is right for him to do, whether it is 'in the bond' or not. In doing this, he is simply doing his duty, or doing what the people really placed him in power for, though they were not able to anticipate, and provide for, special necessities of State, and gave him instructions which would, if he followed the letter of them, prevent him fulfilling his proper function.

"The terms of the contract, or the conditions on which the people transfer their right to a single Council or man, ought undoubtedly to be violated, when the common safety requires that they should be broken. And the right to judge regarding this, viz. whether the common safety does require this, belongs to no private citizen, but only to him in whose hands the supreme power is placed. Therefore only the ruling power can, consistently with civil law, be the interpreter of these conditions. No private person can lawfully vindicate them. Hence they are not in reality obligatory upon him who rules the State. Yet, if they are of such a nature that they cannot be violated without thereby weakening the State; that is, without turning the common fear of a majority of the citizens into indignation, the State is thereby dissolved, and the contract comes to an end. Thus the contract is maintained not *Jure civili*, but *Jure belli*. And so, he who rules the State is bound to observe the terms of this contract, for the same reason as a man in the state of Nature is bound, if he would not be his own enemy, to take care not to commit suicide" (*Tract. Pol.*, IV. 6).

This means that there are things which no ruler can do with impunity, conditions which he cannot violate without his own ruin and that of the State. But (*a*) these are not, and cannot be, embodied in any agreement made between the ruler and his subjects, because all such stipulations are subordinate to, and are, at the best, more or less wise and prudent forecastings of what the preservation, development, and dignity of the State will require under particular conditions. It is the latter that the people and the wise ruler really *will*, even when they make a covenant in words. The ruler who would rather let the State be lost than violate the letter of his instructions, is the kind of ruler who does not know his business, nor understand wherein the divinity of rule lies. When Abraham Lincoln, in the American Civil War, took 'the bit between his teeth'; and made himself, by the divine right which wisdom and public spirit confer, a more

absolute autocrat than the Czar of all the Russias, he not only showed that he had a genius for rule, but he also did what the framers of the American Constitution itself really *willed*, though he broke every one of their carefully-devised checks and counter-checks. He violated the verbal and written Social Compact to preserve the real Social Compact, viz. those stable social relations which we call the State. No doubt this seems a dangerous freedom. But Spinoza holds that it is a freedom, or power, which is inherent in the very function of rule, and cannot be taken away. If the ruler does not recognise it he is in that respect (as Plato would say) the less a ruler. For if the power is dangerous to the peace, and liberty, and integrity of the State; the absence of the power, or the absence of recognition of it, is absolutely fatal to the State itself, and therefore to the peace and liberty of every one of its citizens. And, besides, there is no real danger to be apprehended from such power; since all abuse of it inevitably brings its own penalty with it, and works its own cure. For when it is not used for the public welfare it becomes its own worst enemy.

(b) Further, no State can be constituted save on this basis. You cannot have a supreme law and authority, and at the same time reserve certain parts of life from it. You cannot establish a society, and also give every man the right to judge whether the terms of the compact are being observed or not. Civil Law simply *cannot* recognise any such right. No political constitution can make regulations which legitimate civil war. Spinoza's point is, Every man has, in each society, a right to judge whether the terms of the compact are being observed or not, that is to say, whether it is worth his while or not to recognise its laws, and yield obedience to them; but this is not a *civil right*, and never can be made one. To judge in this way is *ipso facto*, so far as this individual is concerned, to put an end to all Civil Law and Right and Constituted Authority. He has, no doubt, a right, nay a duty, in certain cases, so to act. But if he does so he must recognise, and have counted the cost of, the consequences. For he has thereby thrown down the gage of battle to the Civil Order from which he has withdrawn; and by battle

! he must make good his contention. For the State must, by the essential law of its own existence, treat him as an enemy, until it either conquers him or is conquered by him. This right of appeal to arms Spinoza regards as one of man's most sacred rights. But we cannot 'both eat our cake and have it.' To appeal to force *is* to abrogate the civil order of life. It may be worth while to do so. For the Civil Order may be so bad an order that the discomforts of war are preferable to it. But as men always fight for the sake of a better condition of peace, the civil order which arises in and through such a war, *must* make the same absolute claim for itself, and refuse as completely to recognise the right of any private citizen to judge whether it observes the conditions or terms of the compact with which it began, as did the previous civil order on the ruins of which this one arose. Whether the State be a Monarchy, an Aristocracy, or a Democracy, makes no difference in this respect. Every State *qua* State must make this claim, and be not only in theory, but in fact, the supreme and absolute and final judge of all conduct and of every compact.

CHAPTER XIX.

NECESSITY AND ORIGIN OF THE STATE.

THE State, then, came into being in the same way as housebuilding did, viz. because men recognised that each would thereby enjoy more happiness, peace, comfort, or security than he could hope to have without it. The truth of this is nowise affected even if the State is the logical development of family life, or of the larger family which is called the tribe. For this is simply another illustration of the same principle. Men live in families, and recognise a common head, and yield him obedience, because they judge that they cannot live so profitably in any other way. It is true that necessity compels them thus to live together. But what kind of necessity? Not natural necessity. Nothing in the material world, or in the individual's physical frame, *forces* him thus to live in company with his fellows. He can be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, if he likes. He can have his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him, if he will. He can live uncomfortably, he can starve himself, or commit suicide, if he chooses. If he does not choose any of these options, it is because he recognises that he can do much better for himself by having friends than by having enemies, by having a settled abode than by having none, by nourishing his body than by starving it, and so on. These are necessities, but necessities of thought. We are within the world of spirit from the very beginning of social life. It is not our physical frame which makes us social, but the fact that even the craving for food or for company is a thought, a consciousness of a better condition of life. And civil order

is, in the lowest form in which it exists, the product of this conscious thought and willing of our own welfare, while in its highest form it is no more. Hence, if we take any stage of political or social organisation and analyse it, we shall find the same essential elements or constituents in it, as there are in one higher or lower in the scale. The life may be very different, the objects of desire quite other, the organisation and means of giving effect to its will even opposite; yet in each case we find human thought, foresight, skill, reason in a form more or less true, struggling with more or with less success to 'breast the blows of circumstance,' to grapple with the conditions, physical and human, which make its problems, and to secure for human beings, a happier, richer, safer life.

Spinoza's treatment of the State is penetrated through and through by the sense that instead of Government being an alien force against which the individual must ever be on his guard lest it encroach upon his province, it is the best friend he has in the world, the creation of which he should be most proud, the 'better self' which maintains for him no less than for others the conditions essential to the exercise of his best powers, guarding him against his own weakness and fallibility and folly, and guiding him in the path in which alone he can find true happiness. To conceive it as opposed to the freedom and intellectual and moral development of its citizens is to understand neither the one side of the case nor the other. How can that be contrary to man's true progress in life and character without which all progress would be impossible? No doubt the ballast of a boat does from one point of view prejudicially affect its speed, but if the boat could not sail at all without its ballast, we can hardly call it a hindrance to the boat's progress.

Against the view that the State ever is, or can be, antagonistic to the individual's best interests, Spinoza directs some of his heaviest artillery:

"It may be objected that it is surely contrary to the dictate of Reason for a man to subject himself entirely to another's judgment. And that in that case the *status civilis* is necessarily contrary to Reason. If this view were true, it would follow that the *status civilis* is irrational, and could not have been called into existence except by men destitute of Reason. It

would not have been created by men who are led by Reason. But Reason teaches nothing contrary to Nature. Its teaching therefore cannot be that every one should, so long as men are subject to emotions, remain his own master (*sui juris*). That is to say, Reason declares this to be an impossibility. Further, the whole teaching of Reason is, that we should seek the things that make for peace. And peace cannot be secured unless the common laws of a State are preserved inviolate. Hence the more any man is led by Reason, that is to say, the more free any man is, the more resolute will he be to maintain the laws of the State, and to obey the commands of the sovereign whose subject he is. Again, the *status civilis* has its natural source in the desire to be free from some common fear, and to remove common causes of unhappiness. Hence its chief end is just that which each man who was guided by Reason would try, but try in vain, to reach in the State of Nature. Thus even if the man who makes Reason his guide has sometimes, in obeying the commands of the State, to do what he knows to be contrary to Reason, this loss is far more than made up to him by the benefits which the *status civilis* itself confers upon him. And surely it is a law of Reason that a man should always choose the lesser of two evils. Our conclusion, accordingly, is that no one acts in any way contrary to the prescript of his own Reason when he does that which the law of the State requires should be done. This, however, will be more readily admitted after we have explained how far the power, and therefore the right, of the State extends" (*Tract. Pol.*, III. 6). "The man who is led by Reason enjoys a larger freedom in the State, where he lives in accordance with the decree of a community, than in a condition of solitude where he obeys himself alone" (*Ethics*, IV. 73). "A man can do nothing contrary to the decree and dictate of his own Reason in acting according to the decrees of the sovereign power. For it was just at the bidding of Reason that he willed to transfer to that sovereign power his right of living according to his own judgment" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 20). "In whatever State a man lives he can be free."

The end for the sake of which the State is called into being is just that which each man, if he could know and will his own greatest happiness, would aim at of his own accord. For "the last end of the State is not dominion (*dominari*), nor the restraining of men by fear, and subjecting them to a foreign yoke. On the contrary, its end is to deliver each man from fear, so that he may be able to live with the utmost possible security, that is to say, that he may maintain in the best way (*optime*) his own natural Right to exist and to act, without doing harm either to himself or to his neighbours. The end of Civil Community is, I repeat, not to make rational beings into brute beasts or into

automata. It is to enable their bodies and their minds to exercise with safety all their functions. It is to lead men to live by and exercise a free Reason, that they may not waste their strength in hatred, anger, and guile, nor act unfairly toward one another. Thus the end of the State is really *Libertas*" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 20).

→ For this reason, the power and the right which, in the state of Nature, each man necessarily enjoyed to defend himself in whatever way, and by the use of whatever weapons, seemed best to him, can no longer belong to him in a Civil Community. He may stay outside of such a Civil Order if he thinks he can do better for himself by taking this course; but he must in this case submit to the consequences of doing so. And as no human being, except a lunatic, ever is willing to submit to the consequences of being his own providence, we may say that the Civil Order is natural to every one, and even that it is brought into being, and maintained in being, by the thought and will and reason of each individual within it. For while it may be, and indeed is, some passion, some common hope, or fear, or desire for revenge which first makes men unite, rather than reasoning or the 'good will,' Spinoza holds that each of these passions is already reason or thought in an inchoate or undeveloped form. The man who recognises a danger and unites with others to front it, is not acting irrationally, but at the bidding of his own Reason. Indeed, this is what makes it possible for men to unite even on the basis of a common fear or hope, namely because each of these is a thought and the thought of the good in some form. Spinoza calls them passions or emotions rather than Reason, because he wishes to retain the word Reason for the conception and the willing of a good in which form and content, the body and the soul of the individual's endeavour are in complete harmony. That is to say, a man acts according to, or is led by, Reason, in the true and full sense of the word, only when he not merely does the best he knows, but when he knows and loves and does the best that is open to a human being. In this sense, of course, none of us can claim to be quite rational, or (in Spinoza's equivalent phrase) quite free. But men may

be, and are, more or less rational. For while a passion is always an inadequate idea of our own good or welfare, one passion may be more adequate or more inadequate than another. What makes it a passion is its *inadequacy*; but what prevents it being at peace with itself is that it is an inadequate *idea*, or judgment, of individual welfare. Thus an emotion of fear or hope or even revenge always embodies an interest or *utilitas*. And this element simply needs expansion, development, unfolding to become the conception of a self-complete and abiding *utilitas* such as Reason can find itself perfectly realised in. Hence when it is said that men are led in the main rather by passion or emotion than by Reason, it is not meant that any man ever is led except by his own thought, judgment, or reason, but only that his thought, reason, or judgment has as yet attained only an imperfect realisation, and presents the individual's welfare to him in a narrow, partial, and self-divided way. A man is led by passion rather than by Reason so long as he does not understand the truth of his own nature, and what would constitute for him a perfect and complete happiness; but seeks temporary and partial advantages with all the abandon of a nature which nothing but God, or goodness, can satisfy.

Thus we can understand why Spinoza holds, both that the State, or *status civilis*, has its origin in and is maintained by, the Reason of each individual who obeys its laws, and yet that if each of them was really led by Reason, the State would be unnecessary. Each man sees that for the attainment of a particular end or object of desire, organised rule is a necessity; he judges by his own reason that he cannot get this or that, ward off this or that danger, or form this or that tie, except on such a condition. And he thinks out this condition, and wills it, for the sake of the particular end he wants, just because he recognises that he cannot get in any other way what he wants, and thinks desirable for him. The Civil Order is therefore the product of Reason, but of Reason in the form of desire for a particular satisfaction or end. What the man wants is the particular object or advantage. But to get it, he has to think and will it through a system

or order of life which other men also will have an equal interest in maintaining. That is to say, to get what he wants, he must not only will a civil order, but such a civil order as other men will defend because they also think that in this way they are doing the best for themselves. So long as a man desires only the particular end for its own sake (*i.e.* so long as he is led by a passion) he considers it a 'nuisance' that he cannot get what he wants without also willing conditions of life which will give everybody else what they want. But this necessary nuisance is just the saving element in all human desire, viz. that every man must think and will the welfare of others no less than his own if he is to attain his own at all. This condition of existence encompasses human life and volition from first to last, just because man can, nay must, think the conditions of his own happiness, and this is the condition which most affects it. To the bad man, the man of narrow views and sympathies, the man devoted to pleasure or to money-making, this law of existence is a 'limit,' a restriction, a yoke from which he would fain be free. But he is bad and partial and narrow just because he feels it so. His badness is a self-contradiction of which he is as yet unaware; since he does not see that if what he would like were to happen and this limit were taken away, both himself and his advantage would disappear with it. The good man is good, and takes a broader, wiser, saner, and more rational view of his own welfare, just because he understands that this 'limit,' or law, which makes his welfare and that of others inseparable, is not a 'limit' on his desire, but its power, its freedom, its everlasting effort to know and will something better or more satisfying.

But every man wills, and thinks, the good at first in the form of a particular advantage, and cannot will it except in this way. His thoughts and conceptions of his welfare are inadequate before they are adequate. And it is to further this process that he wills and maintains the State. He recognises that he is stronger when united with other men by permanent bonds than when these bonds are changeable at each man's good pleasure. And he even recognises that it is good for himself to be forced at times to do that which

inclination would not of itself prompt. He has moments of clearer discernment, more resolute will, more abounding vitality than he enjoys at other times. And, being able to anticipate that he will not be always strong, or vigilant, or firm of purpose, or quick-witted, he can and does take measures to supplement his own weakness and to constrain his own inclination for the sake of that welfare which he sees more clearly and wills more resolutely at one time than he does at another.

Hence Law and a civil society are as needful to protect a man against himself as to protect him against others. While he is led by his passions, and in the measure in which he is so, he is his own worst enemy. And the Law is his better self, the Reason which would save him from the worst excesses into which his own weakness, and insufficiency, and ignorance would betray him to his own ruin.

This explains why Spinoza contends that neither Religion, nor the presence of Reason in the individual man, can be made a substitute for the State. He would indeed admit (1) that to make men truly religious, and to lead them to live according to the highest dictate of their own Reason, is the one end of absolute and complete and intrinsic worth to be found in the world. "In nothing can any man better show how much he excels in skill and in intellectual capacity than in so educating men that they will learn to direct their lives by the rule of their own Reason" (*Ethics*, Part 4, Append., § 9). (2) He would also admit that the State is only a means to this end, and that its whole worth and value consist in the measure in which it contributes to this end. And (3) he would admit that if religion and morality were the unfailing rule and motive of men's actions, the State, and the sanctions by which it does its work, could be entirely abolished.

But the difficulty is just, that men are not quite rational, moral, or religious, but only in process of becoming so. Does any man always know and choose his own best welfare? Does any man love God with all his heart and soul? Does any man love his neighbour as himself? If this is not true of *any* man, how foolish it would be to trust

every man's happiness to his own Reason and sense of religious duty. If we wish to give morality and religion the supremacy which they may attain, we must recognise the slow and gradual process of self-development by which alone they become effective spiritual agencies, and we must also be prepared to find that 'that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural.'

"All are indeed persuaded that Religion teaches that every man should love his neighbour as himself, that is to say, that each should defend the rights of others as earnestly as he would his own. Yet this conviction has very little influence over men's emotions. It is no doubt of some account in the hour of death, but this is due to the fact that disease has then weakened the emotions themselves, and the man lies helpless. And this principle of conduct is assented to in church, for there men do not have any dealings with one another. But, in the mart and in the court it has little or no effect, although this is just where the need for it is greatest" (*Tract. Pol.*, I. 5). "It is on every one's lips that Holy Scripture is the word of God, because it teaches true blessedness or the way of salvation. But their actions give evidence of a very different belief. For there is nothing which men in general are less anxious to do than to live in accordance with the teaching of Holy Scripture. . . . If men did say with sincerity of heart what they testify in words regarding Scripture, they would conduct their lives in a very different way. Their minds would not be troubled with so many discords, nor would such bitter hatreds set them at variance" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 7).

And, if Religion in the individual man is an insufficient security for the conserving and the development of the good life, that is, for making religion and morality the supreme rule of all men's conduct; no less insufficient is the Reason of each man. For "good men are few." "It needs a singular power of soul for any man to observe a plan of life for himself, and not be carried away by the emotions of others." "We showed in our *Ethics* that Reason can indeed do much to restrain and control men's emotions. But we saw at the same time that the way which Reason of itself teaches is a very arduous one. Hence those that believe that men in general, or those who have to conduct public affairs, can be made to direct their lives solely from the prescript of Reason, are dreaming of the golden age of the poets or a mere day-dream" (*Tract. Pol.*, I. 5). "No one is so vigilant as not sometimes to fall asleep. Nor has there ever been any one with a soul so strong and sound as not sometimes, and especially when there was sorest need of strength of soul, to be found unequal to the call made upon him."

Spinoza's argument then is, that there is nothing in the nature of morality, religion, or reason which requires us to

dispense with, or enables us to do without, the State or Civil Order. Nay, in each of them there is much that makes the State an absolute necessity. For, without settled laws and rules of conduct, without command and penalty, morality, religion, and reason would either not be at all, or would be only as a vague and ineffectual effort. There could be no sure progress, no unfolding and maintaining of better thought, better volition, better forms of conduct. What makes strenuous moral and intellectual and religious endeavour possible, and gives it the confidence which is more than half the struggle, is just the fact that new attainments are won in virtue of old achievements, nay, not only won but kept; and that every attainment is secured forever through a stable and permanent organisation of human life. Each individual thus has at his free disposal, in the form of law, custom, rules of conduct, education, religion, etc., a store of wisdom, prudence, energy, caution, discipline, direction, which infinitely exceeds what he could otherwise attain. He may no doubt call this priceless wealth of human labour and genius a limit upon his freedom, a yoke of tradition, an alien law; but by doing so he simply shows how ignorant he is of the content of his true happiness and freedom. And though he may call his best friend his enemy, and may violate the laws, his friend simply, in such a case, has all the more compassion on his ignorance and folly, and pays him the more assiduous attention.

- The State then is the creation of human thought working in and through individuals. It is a necessity, but a necessity of thought. And the necessity of the thought is in its content, that is, in the positive advantages which a Civil Order can bring to human beings as contrasted with the discomfort, loss, and impotence which they would endure in its absence. In this sense organised Society is natural, a necessary product—like language, or tools, or music, or clothes, or houses—of human thought and volition, or of that self-preserving impulse which is always the effort to 'better' oneself.

The further question which now arises is, on what conditions is such a *status civilis* attainable? How will it

succeed in making itself effective, or in doing its work to most purpose? What powers must it have if it is to be of use, and of the greatest use; and whence are these powers to come?

In answering these questions, Spinoza insists first of all that if you want a State, or Civil Order, you must pay for it. You do not need to have it, if you do not think it worth its price; but if you do want it, you must not begin to grudge the very qualities, powers, rights which enable it to do its work to the best advantage. It would be a pity to buy an expensive machine and grudge the oil to keep it going. It is not worth while to invest in a watch-dog if you mean to do all the barking yourself. You must either do without the State, or be prepared to give it scope and authority. Nay, not only to give it authority, but to give it all the authority it can possibly take and use. And why should you not? If it is your servant, the agent of your purposes; if it is for your benefit it exists and works, why be so foolishly suspicious and niggardly as to try to withhold the very things that will make it strong, united, secure, and powerful? And if there are dangers incident to this grant of power, niggardliness and suspicion is not the way to avert them. If you think a knife useful, you must be prepared to take the risk of some day cutting your fingers with it. But to avert this danger by keeping it blunt is to deprive yourself of the use and value of the knife altogether, for the sake of securing yourself against a slight risk. You cannot at once have the advantage of the excellence or virtue of a thing, and be free from the dangers which that very excellence involves. But the wise man is he who does not fear to take the risk, knowing that at the worst he will thus gain much more than he will lose, and knowing also that the more he understands what he uses the less risk will there be in using it.

The State then has a virtue or excellence so unique, and so indispensable for the welfare of each man, that there is no human being who is willing to live without it. But he who is not willing to live without it, must also will all the conditions that go to its efficiency, else he must live without

it. For even the State "is a natural object with laws of its own existence." You may constitute a State, or you may not. But you cannot constitute a State, and give it, or withhold from it, whatever powers you please. Even the State itself cannot resign its powers, for to do so is to resign its functions, and commit political suicide. "If the State has given each of its citizens the power of living as he pleases, it has, by doing so, destroyed itself. It no longer remains a State, but all things return to the state of Nature. Hence it follows that it is not even conceivable that each citizen should, by ordinance of the State, be allowed to live as he lists" (*Tract. Pol.*, III. 3). Hence, to limit the power of the State, to weaken its energy, its power of initiative, its title to obedience, its right to make and interpret the laws, is to weaken and impoverish the life of every citizen within it, to leave room for, and furnish cause for, that very collision of interest, and that envy and hatred and strife, which the State was formed to remove. Distrust of your own agent is the surest way of making him unworthy of your trust; and to limit the powers and functions of a political community in order to guard against the danger of such a regulation of conduct as every political organisation involves, is the one infallible way of being 'doubly wretched.'

The State then should have, must (if it is to be a State) have, ~~certain powers~~. Whence do they come? Simply from the individual men who compose it. This does not mean that we merely add together a large number of non-social units, and get a total which we call the State. As we have seen, men are not, as individuals, non-social at all, even in the lowest forms in which they exist. They do not wait for Civil Life to teach them how to co-operate and be mutually helpful. All that the State does is to make fluid relations fixed and reliable; it does not create these relations themselves. Hence whatever powers, rights, privileges it enjoys, it derives from the reason, will, capacities of its constituent members. It is strong and secure as they will their good strongly and wisely, and see in their Civil Order the support of all their best endeavour, the guardian of their most sacred interests and hopes. This 'will' or 'thought' is not only the

source of the State's privileges, rights, prerogatives. It is their essence. It must originate them, but it must also be their immanent life, their energy, the soul of them, apart from which they would be but paper and ink. Without this constant and continuous volition on the part of the citizens, government, law, civil order would be as helpless as a bird in a vacuum. We shall have abundant illustrations of this principle in the sequel. The point at the moment is, that a State cannot come into existence at all, unless the men who compose it give it of the power and capacity and right which God or Nature has endowed them with. There is 'no power but of God,' and it is in individual men alone that God has incarnated the power in virtue of which the State begins and continues. It is only in, and through, their souls.

Hence, the existence of a State necessarily involves that each individual gives up something. He gives it up, no doubt, in this as in every case, because he expects to get something better in return, believing that he cannot be a loser by sacrificing a lesser advantage for a greater one. He gives up the right or liberty to act as seems best to himself, and agrees, or wills, to act only as shall seem best to the community as a whole. For each believes, and sees, that if every man gives up this freedom to act as he pleases, and wills to make the common judgment his guide, he will as an individual be gaining a great deal and losing very little. For the freedom to act as one pleases is a phrase which smells better than it tastes. It is not an impossible idea, but it is, for every one, a very uncomfortable condition. When the freedom I enjoy to act as I please toward all other men, presents its obverse side to me as the freedom of all other men to act as they please toward me, I begin to revise my first estimate of the value of 'unlimited freedom.' The real freedom I can get under these conditions, or (to put it more simply) the amount of 'my own way' I can get under these circumstances, is startlingly small, so small that everybody sees it is a very bad bargain.

Thus each man, whether by helping to establish a State, or by remaining in and as a member of a State which he finds already in existence, conclusively shows that his belief,

thought, or will is that he can get much more that he wants, can be happier or lead what is, in his own judgment, a more desirable existence, through a Civil Order (in spite of the limitation upon his native freedom which it necessarily involves), than he could in any other way. It is, therefore, not true to say that a man acts contrary to his own judgment or reason when he forms, or continues to live in, a State which determines what is and is not lawful for him to do. Even when he yields only "to force or to necessity," and does what the law enjoins simply through fear or compulsion, he is still acting in accordance with his own Reason, and is ruled by his own faculty of judgment. For this fear or compulsion is nothing but a spiritual motive. It is not the man's body which is compelled or made afraid. It is his soul which *judges* that, in these circumstances, that is, where the authority that commands has also the will and the power to take from him all the things which he himself values—property, liberty, freedom from pain, friends, even life itself—he will do much better for himself, and will lose much less, if he obeys than if he disobeys. But still obedience under compulsion is always the free consent and judgment of a man's own Reason, as even compulsion cannot move anyone to action except through his own thought and willing of his welfare. The more difficult case of the man who knows assuredly that some course of action would be better both for himself and for others, than that which the law or the State enjoins and enforces, can be settled in the same way. For even though such an action be better in itself, or in certain relations, and is not better *on the whole*, it is not right, or the dictate of a man's own Reason, that it should be done. And an action never is, or can be, better on the whole, if the doing of it by oneself or by others would lead to the subverting of Government and the weakening of the stable order of social life of which organised rule is the main safeguard. No wise man will, if he appeal to his own Reason, get any warrant for following a 'better' course of conduct which would tend to destroy the very power which gives security, strength, purpose, and impulse to all struggle for and achievement of, a better life by any human being.

Of course, not all that a man knows to be 'better in itself' for himself and for others is thus at variance with State law. The problem does not even arise in one case in a million. As a rule, the State and the law has a voracious appetite, and a perfect digestion, for all the 'better will,' 'better thought,' better conduct, better social and personal relations which any man can conceive and desire. Its chronic complaint is that it is always hungry, and, like *Oliver Twist*, always asking for more. It is for this reason that the good man, or the man who understands his own and others' true welfare, can be free in any State. It is not in the power of any law or ruler or individual to prevent a man being as good, as kind, as unselfish, as compassionate, as considerate, as thoughtful, and wise and prudent and temperate and just as he wishes to be. He can live as devotedly moral and religious a life under Turkish despotism as under a French republic, if he desires to do so. Of course under some conditions, men in general may be more ready to wish to be good than under others, and Spinoza fully recognises this. But that is not the point here. The point is that true goodness can, under no Civil Order whatever, find law and government an obstacle or a hindrance, for God has not given the State this power, because such power is not in the human nature from which the State sprang and by which it is maintained. No one can prevent me being as moral and religious as I desire to be. No power in the world, nor all its powers in combination, can effect this result.)

† In whatever State a man may be, he can be free. For a man is free in so far as he is led by Reason. Now Reason prompts men under all conditions to make and maintain peace. But peace cannot be maintained, unless the common laws of the State are preserved inviolate. Hence, the more a man is led by Reason, that is to say, the more free he is, the more steadfast will he be in observing the laws of the State, and in fulfilling the commands of the supreme power whose subject he is" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Note 33). "The man who is led by Reason is not induced to obey the law through fear of it. But in so far as he endeavours to preserve his own being in accordance with the dictate of Reason, that is to say, in so far as he endeavours to live freely, he desires to have regard to the life and welfare of the community, and consequently he desires to

live according to the common decree of the State. Hence, the man who is led by Reason desires, to the end that he may enjoy a greater freedom, to maintain and obey the common laws of the State" (IV. 73, Dem.).

There is nothing in this at variance with the truth that the conceiving and willing of better conditions and forms of conduct is of the utmost value. Spinoza holds that this is indispensable for the State's own welfare and for the effectiveness of its laws; and, as we shall see when we discuss "Freedom of Thought," the State which tries to prevent such better thinking and willing, is infallibly working its own ruin. But what needs to be noted here is, that all such thinking and willing, if it is not to be its own worst enemy, as well as the enemy of the Civil Order, must take account of, and seek to maintain, strengthen, and develop those stable conditions of existence without which no 'better' thinking or willing has any permanence or force. The conception and the willing of a better kind of conduct for myself and for others must therefore be at the same time the conception and the willing of the State and the laws which now exist, a ready obedience to the spirit as well as to the letter of them, a filling of the channels which they maintain for the good life, until the overflow makes new natural channels in fresh laws and civil rules.

What, precisely, then, does the individual give up in order to enjoy the advantages of the *status civilis*? Of course, in a high sense, he does not give up anything, that is to say, he does not lose but gain by the exchange; he finds it the best bargain he ever made. None the less, he does, in forming a Civil Order, or in living under one, give up something which it is not only physically possible for him to keep, but also something which he values and is very unwilling to give up, would not indeed give up at all were it not that the Civil Order offers him advantages which he values still more. It is because he cannot have both, that he prefers the State which he judges (and rightly judges) to be on the whole the more advantageous form of existence for him. He gives up therefore the power and the right which God or Nature has given him to do, and to forbear doing, whatever is, in his judgment, most for his own advantage, and he agrees to be ruled in

his conduct not by what he judges best, but by what the State judges best for all, and therefore best for him. He resigns his *Jus Naturae* in favour of a ruling power which has also at its disposal the *Jus Naturae* of every other individual within the community. He agrees that that shall be right and just and lawful for him which the State declares to be so. He transfers his power and right absolutely. It ceases now to belong to him. And all right that he may, as an individual, enjoy within the State is that which the State grants to him; he has no civil rights to act against the State, or to do anything except that which the State commands and enjoins. He is no longer a law and an end to himself, his own master, able to do as he pleases, and to be social in whatever ways he pleases.

Clearly, then, the individual in helping to establish a Civil Order, or in continuing to live under one when he finds himself born into such a life, is sacrificing a great deal, sacrificing so much that the exchange seems at first sight a doubtful bargain. He ceases to be able to do a single act simply at his own good pleasure. All that he may now lawfully do, or enjoy, or possess, must be through permission or concession or injunction from the State itself. We often, indeed, speak of social life, family life, the world of business and of recreation, as outside of State control, or as a law to itself. In no sense is this true. No State can make any such concession, and remain a State. It simply regulates different kinds or spheres of conduct in different ways. The family and the sacred ties and relationships which it expresses, social life and intercourse, recreation and industrial relationships are all quite as much subordinate to, and controlled by the State, as the army or the navy. The only difference is that the State regulates them in different ways, and allows (in its own interest) a liberty of action and independence of initiative in these spheres which it cannot, in its own interest, allow in others. But a father's right to control his children, a husband's right to call a wife his own, an employer's right to settle his workmen's wages and to engage and dismiss them when it suits him, an individual's right to call this money or property or pair of shoes 'mine,'

a church's right to organise itself as it pleases and exercise its worship unmolested—all of these are rights granted by the State, valid and valuable so long as, on this basis, the State can (according to its own judgment) enjoy the best and strongest existence, but no less terminable and modifiable when the State judges otherwise. The idea that a man has property which he can call his own, and that the State has no right to take it without his leave, is one of the delusions which shelters itself under many high-sounding names, such as rights of personality, claims of individuality, private property, my right to do what I will with my own, sacred rights, vested interests. Each of these phrases has some value, a value which will be fully recognised as we proceed with our argument. But they have not the value here set upon them; and to rest rights upon a false basis is the surest way to lose them.

The point that needs to be noted is that private property does not differ from public property except in the fact that the State entrusts it to, and maintains its use by, private citizens, instead of entrusting it to, and maintaining its use by, public officials. It is no less State or public property in the one case than in the other. That most pestilent of all distinctions, the distinction between the individual and society, is at once the cause and the effect of the confused thought on this subject. Even to ask the question, what do, or can, men do for themselves and what does, or can, Society or the State do for them, is to set a problem which has no answer, because it is an abstract and impossible problem, just like asking what can the hand do for itself, and what can the head do for it. An answer to either is the answer to both. What I do for myself is also what the State does through and for me. And what the State does for me is just what I do for myself. This is not paradox, or juggling with phrases, but the plain facts of the case. There is no possible opposition, or even distinction, between myself as an individual, and the Society or State of which I am a member; and the persistent attempts to find what does not exist, and the endless puzzles and contradictions and ingenuity thereby

developed, awake in us the same thrilling interest as the discoveries of Lemuel Gulliver, or the marvellous achievements of Aladdin and his lamp. If a State is, as we are so often told, 'socialistic' when it claims to be the source and the possessor of all property, the judge of all rights, the supreme ruler of conduct, the great monopolist that would lay its greedy hand on everything that men have; then, I am afraid all States are 'socialistic,' and will be to the end of time. For if this is socialism, it is simply what we call Society, and under this harmless name, no one, judging by men's conduct, seems very anxious to dispense with these conditions of life. On this footing men will live together in harmony; on any other they will not, and cannot. For while we may, or may not, constitute and maintain a State, in the sense that no outward force can make us do so, except as we judge this Civil Condition of life more for our advantage on the whole than a non-civil one would be; yet if we want a State and judge it better, we cannot have it at all except by giving it this absolute power which vests everything in it, and puts the property, the energy, yea the life of every individual within it, at its free and uncontrolled discretion. What this involves we have now to unfold.

CHAPTER XX.

THE NATURE OF GOVERNMENT.

THE leading principle in Spinoza's political theory is that the State does not mean the ruler, nor is the Government synonymous with those who have the chief place in the community. Both State and Government mean, no less, those who are ruled and who are, as Austin put it, 'in a habit of obedience.' In this he separates himself from Hobbes, even where there is a verbal agreement in their statements. To Hobbes the ruler and the State are synonymous terms, while to Spinoza they never are, except in a case to be afterwards explained. To Hobbes the supreme ruler in the State is sacred as a person, and irrespective of his actions. He has a right to obedience under all conditions, and his power must be uncontrolled and unfettered. To Spinoza the State alone is thus sacred; and the State includes the subjects as well as the ruler. No doubt the person of the ruler is sacred in a higher degree than the person of any subject; but it is so, because the '*persona civilis*,' i.e. the office or function of the ruler, is a more important one for the whole community than the '*persona civilis*' of a subject. And the civil personality of the ruler, or the sacredness of his office, is not a privilege which is inseparably attached to a particular individual, but a *virtus* or power which depends on, and varies in extent with, its utility to the whole State. Hence, while Spinoza contends that the power and right which each individual enjoys in a non-civil condition of life, to act as he thinks best for himself, entirely ceases in the civil order, and is absolutely

transferred ; he does not hold that this is transferred to a King, or ruler, but to the State, of which the individual who has thus transferred his power is a citizen, and therefore a sharer in the benefits which arise from this transference.

Spinoza does indeed believe that the ideal State is that in which the ruler's power is absolute ; and that the Monarch who can say with truth *L'état c'est moi* is the best of all rulers, and has the happiest subjects. But he interprets this in just the opposite way from that in which Hobbes did. For his point is that no rule save the best, and no ruler save he who knows and does what the public weal requires, can be absolute in his control of his subjects. Absolutism, as we shall see, is the false absolute and not the true ; for perfect absolutism is, as Plato said, perfect weakness. Unlimited Monarchy is the most dangerous and precarious of all kinds of rule, whether it be regarded from the point of view of the ruler or from that of his subjects. And the absolute autocracy and misgovernment of men like Louis XIV. is but the fatal power which enables a man to dig his own grave.

Hence, while Spinoza speaks of men transferring their right or power to the State, he also speaks of the ruler, or the supreme power in the State, as having absolute right or power to decide all that men should and should not do. That is to say, he holds that though men do transfer their power to the community as a whole, and not to one or a few men ; yet this right does vest absolutely in, or is absolutely transferred to, the ruling man or class in the Community. It is their business, and theirs alone, to command and to punish ; and no subject has any right to disobey, or to claim to be the interpreter of the laws of the State.

This, however, is not only quite consistent with, but is just the logical consequence of what has been already said. For it is the nature of rule to have, and even to be, this universal power or right. He who rules with most wisdom has most of this *jus* or *potentia* which every man transfers to him ; because wise rule necessarily involves, or is, this. The ruler who best fulfils his office inevitably gets most authority ; but he gets it not as a particular person, nor even as an official,

but as an indispensable and wholly pervasive influence in the lives of all his subjects. It is for this reason that wise rulers have much power, and foolish ones little. For to have power you must know the material with which you work. A skilled engineer has more power over, or gets more out of, the machine with which he works, than an ignorant one. So a wise ruler, or ruling Council, has more power over the subjects, because it knows them and their wants, and the means of supplying these wants, better than a tactless ruler or Council does. Thus in proportion as the ruling power knows and does its proper business, it will be strong and stable and free from rebellion, while in proportion as it does not, it will be helpless and rightless.

We may call (if we will) the power of a wise ruler the reward of his wisdom, and the weakness of a foolish one the punishment of his folly. But we must always bear in mind that the reward and punishment are inevitable, because they are just part of the very nature of wise and of foolish rule respectively. They are inevitable for the same reason as it is inevitable that the angles of a triangle be equal to two right angles, namely because this is part of the nature of a triangle. Hence it is not, as Hobbes supposed, a question of the people transferring, once for all, their power and right to the supreme person in the State, and being thereafter forever bound to obey him without demur. Spinoza regards this as an absurd and impossible conception. "Men are not cattle." We must remember the nature of the material with which we are dealing. Even if men had made any such agreement, not only are they not bound to keep it; they are bound to break it. For there is no power in human nature which makes it even possible to keep such an agreement. No one can will to do anything but what appears to himself to be best for him at each moment, and a ruler with nothing but a formal agreement to appeal to, will get no obedience and will have no right to expect any.

It is for this reason that Spinoza, contrasting his own political theory with that of Hobbes, says, "I always keep the *Jus Naturae* intact and unimpaired." His meaning is, that he carries right through his social theory the principle with

which he started, that a thing has no more, and no less, right than it has power. This holds true of everything and at every moment. It enabled us to explain for example why two men united have more right than one man. It explained also why the individual in a non-civil state of life has less right than a body of men organised into a community. It explained why the right of the ruler *qua* ruler was an absolute one. And when it has carried us so far it must carry us still further. For the same principle which makes the ruler *qua* ruler strong, makes him weak, and robs him of all title to obedience, if he does not know and do his proper work. If he does not understand the nature and conditions of all successful and capable ruling of men, he is necessarily impotent. The people may have made a covenant with him, he may be his father's son and have legal right to the throne, he may have the sanction and blessing of the Church, the body of the citizens may even have kindly feelings towards him; yet if he does not recognise and maintain the interests for the sake of which his office exists, the power inevitably goes from him. The people cannot retain it to him though they would. He will have it if he deserves to have it. If he has it not, he has no right to expect obedience.

This principle that "the obligation to obey the rulers, whether these be a King, or a body of Nobles, or the whole body of the people, lasts only so long as they maintain their power" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16), Spinoza values not only as a safeguard against such an absolutism as Hobbes had sought to deify, but mainly because it is the truth, or nature, or essence of all rule, and is therefore the strength and the solace of every ruler who knows his proper business, and does it. His proper business is to understand the men over whom he is called to rule, to know their life and its needs, to think out the things that will make existence seem richer and more desirable for them, and to make laws that will be obeyed, because men will recognise that the laws are in their interest. In so far as he does this he rules by the highest, yea by the only divine right there is, or has ever been, in the world. Moses ruled over the Hebrews by divine right, because God had made him the

wisest man among them, the man most fitted to understand how they could live together in harmony and security, and best able to lay down the laws which God's wisdom taught him were for their welfare. An excellent illustration of the opposite side of this truth is to be found in the fourth chapter of Daniel, where Nebuchadnezzar's fall from, and restoration to, power are depicted in language which is no less instructive to the student of politics than to the student of religion.

Spinoza, therefore, holds that no one has any right to obey a ruler who does not maintain the conditions for the sake of which men form a State and elect rulers. He has no right or duty to obey in such a case, because he has no power to give up his natural right to do the best for himself; and no one does the best for himself by obeying him who has no regard for the interest of his subjects, since such a man is weak and powerless. "The power of the King or the Nobles or the people was the inducement for each man to transfer his right." "Only from the fear of a greater evil, or the hope of a greater good, can any one sincerely promise that he will give up the right which he has to all things. And only for the same reason will any man keep his promises." That is to say, a man gives up his natural right to all things, and is bound by his promises, because on this basis, and on this alone, can he enjoy the advantages which a settled order brings to him. But if the ruler cannot maintain such a settled order, he has no right to claim the obedience which is desirable only for the sake of this end. His power passes away from him, and, seeing that men cannot live together without some stable order of life, it passes necessarily into the hands of him who, knowing how men should be governed, is stronger than he. "The right to obedience will be enjoyed by a ruler so long only as he maintains the power of executing his will. Otherwise he will have but a precarious reign, and no one stronger than he will be bound to obey him." "The right of commanding whatever they please belongs to the rulers only so long as they really have supreme power. If they lose this they lose at the same time the right to uncontrolled command,

and this right vests in him, or in them who have gained it, and can keep it." "In other words the right to command, and the duty to obey, are relative to the maintenance of certain conditions of existence under which each man will feel that he is doing the best for himself that he can. If these conditions are not maintained, not only is there no divine obligation to obey; there is a divine obligation to disobey, and to set up other rulers who know how, and for what end, God has made men, and made it possible for them to live together for their mutual profit. Men do not have rule or rulers, with all the real renunciation that that involves, simply for 'the fun of the thing,' but only because they want certain benefits very earnestly, and cannot get them save in this way. Hence, to have a nominal ruler who cannot rule is to sup at a Barmecide feast, and have to pay at the door for a solid meal. Of course there are cases where the nominal ruler is maintained in power by the wisdom and skill of another man, or body of men, who are not called rulers. But to this Spinoza's answer is, it matters nothing who has the *name* of ruler; it is the man who has the wisdom and forethought and enterprise who is the real ruler, and it is in him the power of the State, its unity, and strength, and security are focussed. If the titular sovereign recognises that he has not the power to make his will effective, but has the prudence to recognise that another man or body of men has the power, he may enjoy his place with perfect security so long as he has the good sense to know, and loyally will, the divinely-imposed laws and conditions in virtue of which kingdoms stand and fall.

A sovereign's power then is his function in the community over which he rules. He is strong and safe if he understands the nature and the conditions of his task in life; while he is weak, inconstant, and easily overthrown if he does not. No power or will in heaven or on earth can change this divine law. This is the very nature of sovereignty, and neither subjects nor ruler can sever the necessary connection of cause and effect. You can no more have a supreme authority who cannot keep order and peace within the State, than you can have a bit of glass with the properties of a

tree. Thus when men transfer their right and power to a State, they do so for the sake of the higher and better kind of existence they will thereby secure. If this end is not attained, the transfer is *ipso facto* at any and every moment null and void. "The existence of a State depends on certain conditions. If these conditions are maintained, so also are the reverence and the fear of the subjects towards the State; while if these conditions are destroyed, so also are the reverence and the fear of the subjects; and when reverence and fear are lost, so likewise is the State. The State therefore is bound, if it would be a law and an end to itself (*sui juris*) to maintain the causes of fear and reverence, otherwise it ceases to be a State. For it is as impossible for the man, or the men, who have the chief place in the community, to flaunt their drunkenness and profligacy in public, to play the fool, openly to violate and contemn the laws made by themselves, and at the same time to maintain their sacred majesty, as it is impossible at once to be and not to be. Or again, if they slaughter and plunder their subjects, ravish virgins and so on, they inevitably change the fear of their subjects into indignation. That is to say, they turn the *status civilis* (whose end is peace) into a state of hostility" (*Tract. Pol.*, IV. 4). "The laws and the causes of fear and reverence which the State is bound in its own interest to maintain are determined not by Civil Law, but by the *Jus Naturale*, seeing that they can be vindicated, not by Civil Law or Right, but by right of war (*Jus belli*)" (*Ibid.*, § 5). That is to say, the State rests on, and Civil Law is effective as it is based upon and appeals to, the fear and reverence of the subjects. Neither the State nor civil law creates these conditions of human concord; but each is strong and stable as it is quick to discover and make use of them. While the sovereignty, or Civil Code which assumes that all things are possible to it; that Civil Law is the ultimate and only law of human life; that it may do with impunity whatever it pleases, and constitute the good and the bad, the lawful and the unlawful, at its own unfettered discretion, simply shows how absolutely weak and helpless it is in presence of the task to which the world has called it.

No doubt a man always has the *power* to use his razor as a pen-knife, but the man who thinks this a real power and freedom does not know the distinctive virtue of either, and acts as only a fool would. In the same way, a State which would live and flourish must recognise, first of all, that all things are not possible to it—if it would remain a State. It has been brought into existence to give all who live within it a happier, more secure, more peaceful, and noble kind of life, than they could possibly have without it. If it does this, no power on earth can harm it; if it does not, no power on earth can maintain it. For “no man makes a compact, and no one is bound by his promises, except from the hope of some good, or the apprehension of some evil, which will thence ensue. If this foundation be taken away, the compact automatically is at an end.” “No compact can have any validity except in virtue of its advantageousness (*utilitas*). If this be taken away, the agreement is straightway at an end, and is of no effect.” For *utilitas* “is the life and soul (*robur et vita*) of all human actions.”

To avoid misapprehension, it may be well to point out that Spinoza is not here seeking to make promises and compacts less sacred and binding, but to make them more sacred and obligatory by showing men why they are binding, and to what end they are relative. A man has no right, because God has given him no power, to make any promise contrary to what seems to himself to be on the whole the best for him; and if he has made a promise believing it to be most for his welfare, and afterwards comes to the conclusion that to keep it will not be for his welfare (as judged by himself) on the whole, in this case also he has no right, because God has given him no power, to keep such a promise. Spinoza holds that this is a law, or condition, or ‘eternal truth,’ of human nature which is forever valid, observed by every man and in his every action. To disobey it, is not within his power; for it is God’s law and will for every human being. How then can promises and agreements be binding at all, if every man must, by a controlling necessity of his own thought and will, always choose and do whatever seems best for himself at the moment? Is there

any meaning or worth in promises and agreements at all, if every man is free to, nay must, break them whenever he himself thinks that it will better serve his own interest to violate them?

The difficulty is a real one, but the solution is no less real and significant. Spinoza accepts the last sentence entirely, and uses it as his guiding principle. There is no meaning or worth in promises and agreements at all, *if* every man is free to break them. Yet every man thinks that there is great worth in such promises. The point therefore is, under what conditions are they of value, or what gives them validity? The answer to this is to be found by a full and whole-hearted recognition of the divine law in human nature, that every man will and should, because he must, break any promise which it is not in his own judgment at every moment best for himself to keep. If you do not freely and without qualification accept and adopt this truth, you need go no further. For all your argument and preaching and measures of social reform are simply futile, a fighting against God's law for human welfare. All the force in the world, whether it call itself physical, or civil, or moral, or religious, will not do one iota of good except as it consciously or unconsciously humbles itself to accept and employ this fundamental law of human nature. But if you do recognise it, certain consequences follow. It follows, for example, that it is quite useless to expect men to keep a promise, unless you at the same time take such measures as will secure that, so long as the promise is to be binding, there shall more loss come to them from violating than from keeping it. He is a very foolish person who trusts that another man will observe his engagements in a case where that other has everything to gain, and nothing to lose, by breaking them. The 'man of the world' will no doubt give a ready assent to this view of human nature, while the cynic will mock at it, and the preacher will denounce it. Spinoza does none of these things; he simply states it as an essential element in all men, an element which God has put within each, the endeavour to be and to get all the power and happiness within his reach, which is the law of his life. It is not an

immoral, and it is not a moral principle. But it is the principle which enables men to form mutual agreements, and to remain true to them amid all vicissitudes of outward fortune and of inward emotion. For it determines the condition upon which, and upon which alone, men will be truthful and faithful and honest.

This is the first point, namely that a man has not the power to say to himself, I see clearly that keeping this promise is worse for me than breaking it, yet I will keep it since I have promised. Of course we all observe engagements, agreements, promises which we would much rather not do, which we call foolish, bad for us, against our interest, and so on. But Spinoza's point is that in every such case we keep our engagement, because there is in the background the overwhelming motive, that unless we kept our engagements to others no one else would keep his engagements to us; and if no one made or (what is the same thing) kept any agreements, the State and a settled and secure life would disappear. That is a price too great and ruinous for any man in his senses to think of paying. And the fulfilment of a promise which time, or fuller knowledge, shows to have been a foolish one, is judged and willed by every man as, in all the circumstances of the case, better for him or more for his interest than, by breaking his promise, to incur the tremendous penalty it would bring with it.]

To this there is an apparent exception. Some men do, even in a civil society, break their promises, and refuse to observe the obligations which their own actions or the laws impose upon them. Do these men not deliberately choose and will as better for them a course of conduct which logically involves the dissolution of all civil order? The answer is, No. The apparent exception is not a real exception. For (1) even a criminal does not will the subversion of the social order: how would he steal or lie except under such an order? If he willed the extinction of settled rules and conditions of life altogether (though such a case is hardly conceivable), he would will consistently, and his lying or stealing would be well fitted to realise this end. But the badness of his act is that he wills a self-contradiction. If he

understood himself and his action he could not will what he does. For what he thinks and wills is that a secure and stable life, with the wealth and prosperity which it brings to the community, should still maintain itself in order that he may make his living by preying on it. This cannot in the nature of things be. And he is punished to teach him that his act and his thought are self-contradictory. (2) The laws which punish and restrain him are part of what he has willed. By living in a civil order, and under its laws, he has already willed all that goes to maintain and strengthen it. He has, while he kept the laws, and enjoyed the privileges of their protection and care, helped to perfect the very means which is to bring him to a better mind. (3) The State does not, because of his crime, treat him as an enemy, but as an erring son or citizen. The only men whom the State does treat as enemies are those who, being in it, seek to destroy its very existence, or to set up another in its place; or else those who from without assail its integrity and independence. But a crime is not an act of sedition; and a criminal does not seek the destruction of law and government. He only wishes a little exceptional latitude for himself, and is quite ready that all others should enjoy under settled law the advantages and blessings which constitute his sphere of operations. The punishment which falls upon him is one of the privileges which he enjoys as a citizen, the privilege of being taught by mild and in more or less rational ways that this kind of life does not 'pay' either him or any one else. I say 'mild,' because all civil punishment is mild, compared with the sharp, vindictive, and limitless revenge that would otherwise be his portion if the State did not throw its aegis over even the offenders against its own laws, and allow no one but itself or those commissioned by it to take liberties with their education to a better frame of spirit. If the State treated them as enemies, and said, you have by your conduct made yourselves a menace to society, then all that it would have to do would be to withdraw its protecting hand from them, and whosoever had the power or the cunning to kill them would have a right to do so. It is not a euphemism, but the simple truth, to say that the punishment of the

criminal is the kindly thoughtfulness of the law and of a civil society for his welfare, and the effort not only to teach him to know and to do better, but also to save him from the worst consequences of his own misdeeds.

Thus this apparent exception proves not to be a real one. And we can still maintain that every man wills, however inadequate his conception of it, a settled order of social life, and esteems this an indispensable means to what is in his judgment a desirable existence. It is for this reason that the making and keeping of promises is binding upon men. Because they can, by acting in this way, form ties of a permanent nature for the mutual advantage of all; while they cannot secure these benefits without acting in this way. In other words, the making and keeping of agreements among men is relative to a stable system of rights and duties. Apart from this, it has no meaning or value. Within this system it is absolutely binding, but binding only because of the end for the sake of which this system exists, and because of the value of the interests to which it gives scope and fostering. Hence a promise to act in a certain way, made either to a ruler or a private person, is binding upon the person who made it only so long, and in so far as, the whole order of life to which it is relative is maintained with firmness and efficiency. Under any other conditions it has no meaning or obligation.

- / Spinoza proves this by showing that the reason, or thought, of each man judges mutual trust and fidelity to be a condition of life far more desirable for every one than distrust, suspicion, and fear. Thus, while the Natural Right, or natural power, of each individual includes, and must always include, the power to break his promises, if he will, in his own judgment, thereby secure a better existence for himself, yet it is the aim and end of all organised rule to give men so much more happiness, utility, peace, and security than they could otherwise have, that no sane man *can* prefer to exercise his Natural Right to violate his promises, and thereby destroy all law and security. While therefore you cannot, either by binding a man by promises or by the use of force, make him act in any other way than that which

seems to his own judgment at the moment of his act the best for him, you can by wisdom and foresight devise such measures as will ensure that that will at every moment seem to him his best, which is really best for him, as well as for the whole society. That is to say, you cannot sever the necessary connection between the motive, or cause, of his act and the act itself, nor prove it to be an insufficient motive, but you can add to the motive in some respects and take from it in others, and so get an entirely different action. You cannot make a man keep his promises if it is not, as judged by himself, his interest to observe them ; but if you are wise, you will recognise this as one of the sacred and inviolable divine laws of all human existence, bow your head in its presence, and see that your duty is to *make* it his interest to observe them. You cannot make it the nature of fire not to burn, nor of water not to drown, but you can discern that what you cannot do is the best instrument to your hand for executing what you can do, and so by care and the exercise of intelligence you can change a bad master into a good servant.

Spinoza then holds that no one does, or ought to, or can, make or keep his promises except as it is made 'worth his while,' *i.e.* except as he has more to gain than to lose by making and keeping them. Each man, of course, estimates in his own way what is 'worth his while,' for some see all the advantages that the making and observing of agreements brings to them as well as to their neighbours, while others see only a few of them, and are led rather by fear than by hope. The best men keep all their promises, not because a promise is sacred *per se*, but because by a loyal acceptance of this as a necessary condition of all permanent social ties, they gain for themselves the best things that life and God have to offer to any man, peace of soul, the love of friends, the joys of home, sympathy, mutual help, liberty to employ, and security for the fruits of, their best powers of understanding and will. And if every man knew what was really best for him "there is no one who would not utterly detest guile and deceit, and keep his engagements with the utmost fidelity," but still he would keep them for the sake of that good life of mutual

service and high endeavour of which this is one essential condition.

It is because most men have not yet learned to know and value this good life for its own sake, and to regard it as their absolute and complete best under all possible conditions, that they do not with the utmost zeal and fidelity keep all their engagements, quite apart from any legal reward or punishment. Yea, it is because no man can absolutely trust himself to abide loyally by his promises, despite all temptation and changing emotion and change of judgment, that he wills in his best moments, when his thought is clearest, the enactment of such laws and constraints and restraints as will furnish him in the moment of weakness, indecision, or partial judgment with the added motive which will lead him to choose the absolutely better course as also better for him at the moment when he is called on to act.

This explains a number of ideas on which Spinoza lays stress. In the first place, it shows why Law and Government are needed, namely because all men do in general recognise that the making and keeping of their engagements is the only condition on which they can live together to mutual profit, but they also recognise that they sometimes are so blinded by passion, by misjudgments, by ignorance, by partial and temporary satisfactions, that they cannot trust themselves or others always to do the best, even what is best for themselves, without some other inducement than the judgment and will of the individual's own nature furnishes him with at each and every moment. Hence they will the keeping of engagements, or rather the benefits which thence come to them, so much that they will at the same time all the means necessary to make them always judge that keeping their promises is at any moment much more for their interest than violating them. Just as the man who recognises in an hour of wisdom that the plank thrown across a stream is highly dangerous, and yet is conscious that in a moment of heedlessness or bravado or haste he would be almost certain to take a risk which he now judges a piece of folly, acts with the prudence and self-control of which only a human being is capable when he pitches it into the stream, and through

the wisdom of that moment protects himself against the inconstancy and fluctuation of his own moods and judgments.

Thus the end of all law is the protection of the individual against his own waywardness, ignorance, passion, and weakness. It seeks to be the ever-watchful, ever-faithful, ever-wise, and ever-powerful guardian of his best interests. It seeks in fact to be to all its citizens what a good father and mother are to their children, defending them against their own indiscretions and follies and partial views of happiness even more than against the aggression and violence of others. Spinoza holds that law is needed, because men are still children though their beards are grown. To him the legal axiom that when a man gets full rights of citizenship he is ever after independent, and his own master, so long as he obeys the laws, appears a very partial truth. Experience does not tend to confirm the assumption that a human being on reaching a definite age gets a complete outfit of prudence, foresight, self-restraint, and patriotism; nor is the law justified in believing that every man has the power to guide his life with perfect wisdom and obedience, and that, if he does not, he should be treated as a rebel against the civil order. This may be the theory of the lawyer; but it is not the practice of the law. The State does not, as we have seen, really regard or treat the offenders against its laws as rebels, but as misguided and erring sons, who deserve correction but not outlawry. The punishment which the law awards is one of the privileges or rights of citizenship.

Moreover, it is a serious error to regard the punishment of offenders as the only, or even as the chief, end of law and government. It would be much truer to say that every criminal who is punished is a proof that the State has partly failed in its real end, or failed to do its duty in some form. The power to punish crime is a right which no State can ever give up, but it is the lowest, the weakest, the most wasteful way in which it can spend its strength and its resources. To be forced to set many of the best brains in the country to find out whether some poor wretch who had little reason for observing the law, has or has not stolen; or to be forced to

direct all the organised force of prosperous, happy, well-educated, and highly privileged judges and citizens to crush heart and hope out of some sadly-erring creature to whom home and purity never conveyed any meaning, this is a necessity which, however we may dignify it by calling it Justice, can never be other than the saddest of all sights. Spinoza recognises that it may be necessary, and that when it is necessary, the State has the perfect right to punish ; but the question he asks is, *why* is it necessary? A man may sacrifice the dearest of his possessions to save his wife and family from fire ; and in the circumstances he has no choice ; such action is a necessity. But if he might, by forethought or care, have prevented the fire altogether, you cannot say that the necessity for the sacrifice of his goods proves him to be acting as a wise man would. He has by the neglect of his duty in one direction made his impoverishment a thing which he *has* to choose. In the same way Spinoza argues, you have to punish crime when it is committed, but then you have first made the criminal whom you then have no choice but to punish. In this you are acting foolishly. If you can afford, and are compelled whether you can afford or not, to spend of your best brain and industry and skill on the detection and the punishment of wrong-doers, it would be much saner to spend it on discovering and remedying the causes which make them do wrong. And the question as to the causes which make men do wrong always resolves itself into the question of the absence of the causes essential to their doing right.

“In the best State the laws will be faithfully observed. For there can be no doubt that seditions, wars, and contempt for, or violation of, the laws should be imputed not so much to the wickedness of the subjects as to the bad constitution or organisation of the State. Moreover, as the natural emotions of men are everywhere the same, should wrong-doing be more rampant, and crimes of more frequent occurrence, in one State than in another, it does not admit of question that this is due to the fact that such a State has not made sufficient provision for concord. Its laws have not been made with sufficient wisdom ; and it is because of this

that it does not enjoy the absolute right which a State should have" (*Tract. Pol.*, v. 2).

Spinoza holds that it is no proof of the efficiency of the law that its officers are kept busy settling many civil disputes and bringing many criminals to justice. It is no doubt a high virtue in officials who are appointed for these ends that they be diligent and zealous in the discharge of their duty, just as it is a high virtue in a medicine that it can be depended on to do what is expected of it, and to act energetically if the condition of the patient demands such drastic remedy. But if this is necessary only because the patient has already deranged his own system by a foolish disregard of the laws of health, you cannot say that the necessity for, and the energetic action of, the medicine indicate a very high standard of physical efficiency in the man. In the same way Spinoza maintains that "that State in which an example has daily to be made of offenders against the laws must be suffering from a bad constitution." For if it made right provision—as it is its proper business to do—for the concord and happiness of its citizens, the necessity for that kind of education which we call civil and criminal justice would not arise at all.

Spinoza's point is that the divine majesty and dignity of the law are hardly revealed at all in that criminal justice to which we give the name *par excellence*; and that if the State and the rulers recognised their real duty they would feel the same sense of shame at the occurrence of a crime, and the necessity for punishing it, as a father does when his child goes astray. The majesty and dignity and power of the law are to be seen wholly and solely where we never look for it, viz. in the truthful, honest, mutually helpful and upright lives of those with whom, as we put it, 'the law takes nothing to do.' These are really the one piece of workmanship of which government has the slightest reason to be proud. It has made them. It has worked itself, like the food they eat and the air they breathe, so completely into their being that the law is to them no longer simply a yoke or an outward necessity, but their life and soul and the means of their freedom. It 'takes nothing to do with them,' only because

it has already become one with their own thought and feeling and will. It does not need to strike them with its mailed fist, because it has already found a far more effective way of making them obey its behests, namely by constraining them from within their own nature. Hence there is no virtuous act, no truthful word, no honourable keeping of covenant, can take place within a community, the whole credit of which does not belong to that community and its laws. While there is no falsehood, breach of faith, dispute, vice, or crime, occurring within its borders, which is not a discredit to its laws and a weakening of its strength. Every bad deed and every wrong-doer is a reproach to and a canker in the body politic. And what we misname the majesty of the law is the impotence of the law. For what after all is government for, except to allow and enable every man to make the most of himself? It has given to it so much raw material of brain and heart, in the form of individual human beings, for it to turn to the best account. Its business is to make all this of the highest service. And it has no right to come back with the excuse, I cannot make anything of this man's clearness of eye, skill of hand, enterprise, ingenuity, insight into character, patience, and courage; I propose that we should shut him up for a certain time where he will not trouble me, and I shall set honest men to keep him unprofitably employed; and if I have not thought of any better employment for his energies by the time his period of detention is expired, we shall just shut him up again, and get as many decent men to spend their best strength in weakening the God-given faculty and fibre of his nature, so that we may gradually make him useless to himself and to everyone else.

It is the foolishness of all this, the wasteful extravagance which deliberately weakens and destroys its own resources and strength, that Spinoza takes exception to. It is not that the State has no right and even duty to punish; for it always has such a right. But the question of the State's 'rights' is ultimately, and in every instance, a question of its power, or of what is 'best.' For "not all that we say is done by right or lawfully (*jure*), do we assert to be done for the best

(*optime*). For it is one thing to cultivate a field lawfully, and another to cultivate it to the best advantage. It is one thing to defend oneself, preserve one's existence, pass judgment, etc., lawfully; and another to defend and preserve oneself in the best way, and to form the best judgment. Hence it is one thing to be a lawful and rightful ruler, and to be entitled to administer State affairs, and another to rule in the best way, and to administer public affairs for the true welfare of the State" (*Tract. Pol.*, v. 1).

No one insists more on what has been called the retributive side of punishment than Spinoza. But in three respects his view is at issue with the retributive theory. (1) The connection between the crime and its evil consequences does not wait for the State or Civil Law to make it good in the form of punishment. It is inseparable from the deed. Whatever retribution there is is in the evil action itself. (2) The retribution for a crime falls, and can fall, only in very small measure on the criminal. He suffers no doubt, but every one else in the community suffers deeply also. Every act of theft costs society dear. It makes every individual in the community think more about the care of his goods, exercise greater watchfulness, purchase fresh snibs for his windows, put new locks on his doors, lose some sleep through any unusual noise, distrust those who work for him, and in a word it diverts some of his thoughts from profitable to very unprofitable employment. Every man who does wrong in a community forces every one else to pay part of the price. Even the punishment of crime is a compulsory tax on every honest law-abiding citizen; and the punishment of crime is not only a very costly affair, it is a form of investment which yields very poor returns. (3) This is a condition of human existence which we cannot evade. It is right that every man should pay part of the price, because it is every man's duty and interest to see that the price shall need to be paid as seldom as possible; and if he neglect his duty or interest at the right time, it is inevitable that he shall pay more and get less in return later on.

Spinoza then believes that not only does the larger part of the retribution for every bad action fall upon the whole State,

but also that this is inevitable and right, since the wrong-doer did not make himself, and did not break the law from mere 'cussedness,' but because he had no sufficient motive for observing it. The great principle we have to bear in mind is, that while men are born into the State, and not made by it, yet men as civil (*homines civiles*) are made, and not born, such. Spinoza holds that every man can by well devised and administered laws be made to obey the State and the law, and to do so willingly, recognising such obedience as the best thing for him. This does not mean that every man can be made equally wise or prudent or rational. Spinoza does not believe that this will ever be possible. You can no more make all men equally wise than you can make them all of equal height. But "men, women, and children can all alike be made equally obedient to law," if we will take the needful trouble to find the motives or causes which will make them so. Every organised society has already been in great measure successful in accomplishing this. "And as the vices of the subjects and their excessive licence and disobedience should be imputed to the bad constitution of the State, so their goodness and steadfast observance of the laws should be ascribed mainly to the excellence and absolute right of the State. For this reason it is deservedly regarded as a high testimony to Hannibal's remarkable capacity that no mutiny ever broke out in his army" (*Tract. Pol.*, v. 3). A State is strong and stable as it has thus incarnated its laws in the thoughts, feelings, and interests of its citizens; while it is weak and inefficient in so far as it has not done so, and, because it has not done so, needs to appeal to fear and even to force.

For fear and force are bad motives for a State to have to appeal to. It has no doubt a perfect right to appeal to them if it requires to do so. But yet they are bad, because they are the weakest of all motives, and the State which needs to rely much upon them is in a very perilous case. The weakness of them is easily shown. What power, for example, does superior physical strength give you over any man? Practically none. It is not the giants or the athletes or the policemen who control men and mould their lives.

Nor is fear as a motive to obedience much more efficacious or enduring.

"For so long as men act from fear alone, they do their duty with the greatest reluctance, taking no concern for the utility and the necessity of the thing to be done, but only that they may not lose their heads or suffer punishment. Nay, in such a case they cannot help rejoicing in any evil or loss that befalls the ruler, even though it brings loss upon themselves as well. They cannot help willing every misfortune to befall him, and inflicting it upon him when they can" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 5). "A State whose subjects do not break into rebellion because they are afraid to do so, ought rather to be said to be without war than to be in the enjoyment of peace. . . . That State therefore whose peace depends on the inertness of its subjects, *i.e.* on their being driven like dumb cattle, so that they only learn to be slaves, may with more propriety be called a solitude than a State" (*Tract. Pol.*, v. 4). "He who does the good from true knowledge and love of the good does it freely and with a steadfast spirit; but he who does the good from fear of the bad acts under the compulsion of evil and in the spirit of a slave, and his life is under the control of another" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 4).

Hence in every well-constituted State the end and aim of all law is to lead men by hope and the sense of a positive interest or good which they will secure by their obedience. This is a better motive, because you can get far more out of men, make them infinitely more useful to themselves and to Society, by relying upon it. It involves some positive content or satisfaction, in and through which men may and do will the maintenance of that social order which puts such a good within their reach.

"The laws in every State should be so framed that men are not so much restrained by fear as constrained by the hope of some good; for in this way every one will do his duty zealously." "The thing that needs most attention is that the subjects be led to do their duty rather from good-will than under the compulsion of the law. For a State which aims at ruling men only by fear will rather be without vices than endowed with virtues. Men should be so ruled that they seem to themselves not to be ruled, but to be living each according to his own bent and from his own free resolution; and so they should be restrained solely by the love of freedom, by the desire of increasing their wealth, and by ambition for public honours" (*Tract. Pol.*, x. 8).

In other words, the perfection of law and the divinity of rule are, like the perfection of art or the perfection of health,

most attained when they attract no notice. Government is doing its work best of all when it seems to be doing nothing, for it is then all-pervading and all-controlling. The laws are, or are meant to be, "the soul of the State" (*anima imperii*). If they have to resort to force, it is a sure sign that they have fallen from their high office. For brute force is the weakest, the least lasting, and the least convincing of all the many weapons of security which God has committed to the State's hands. If this is the only way it can rule men, and teach them to observe its laws, it will not enjoy a long tenure of office. This is why we said already that the question of what a State has, and has not, a 'right' to do always is a question of what is the best thing for it to do. And while a resort to force may under certain circumstances be a necessity of its continued existence, it is always a proof that the State has been neglectful of its real duty, viz. to fill men's lives with solid and desirable blessings and interests which might have become so much a part of themselves that they could not but will the observance of laws that make these advantages secure and lasting.

Thus the real power of the ruler is his power over men's souls. The divinity of sovereignty is simply and solely the wisdom which can interpret men's wants, anticipate their thoughts and feelings, and make the law seem, and be, to each citizen not an enemy to be dreaded and eluded, but a friend 'with both hands full.' He who condescends thus to recognise the conditions of all sovereignty will feel a sense of self-reproach whenever he has to rely on 'the strong hand of the law,' for this is the most unprofitable as well as the most irritating and boastful of all his servants. It does its work the worst of all, and it runs up an endless bill of expenses. Real rule appeals to men's hearts, wills, and affections, it enlists their sympathy, enriches their lives, and makes it their direct interest to desire and choose that which is really best for the State and therefore for themselves. That strong rule always means identity of interest between subject and ruler, and that the statesman's one real hold over men is by making himself an indispensable element and influence in their effort to be, to do, and to get the best they

can, this is a doctrine which Spinoza is always preaching. Instead of finding the ideal of strength in the man who can compel the citizens to obey his decrees whether they like it or not, he maintains that such a man is a poor bungler who does not know his trade and seeks to make up in brute force for what he lacks in skill. The ruler is then alone powerful, yea omnipotent, when he so rules and controls the subjects that they seem to be neither ruled nor controlled at all, but to be simply doing, according to their own judgment and inclination, what is most for their interest; for thus to govern men is the very genius of all political order.

"That we may properly understand how far the right and the power of the State extend, it should be noted that the power of the State does not consist simply in the fact that it can compel men by fear. Its power consists really in whatever enables it to secure that men shall obey its commands. For it is obedience, and not the motive from which the obedience springs, which constitutes a subject.^x Hence, whatever be the motive which leads a man to execute the commands of the rulers, whether it be that he fears punishment, or because he is led by hope, or because he loves his country, or whatever be the emotion which impels him, it is in each case his own judgment which determines his obedience, and yet he is also acting under the control of the ruling power. Hence we must not, when a man does something by his own resolution, jump to the conclusion that he does it in virtue of his own rights, and not in virtue of the rights of the State. For, since he is acting according to his own judgment and resolution both when he lives under the constraint of love, and when fear compels him to avoid an evil, there would either be no civil order at all, and no right of government over the subjects, or else we must include within the right of the State everything which can lead men to will, and to give, obedience to its commands. Hence, whatever a subject does which harmonises with the sovereign's enactments, whether he does it under the influence of love, or under the coercion of fear, or (as is more frequently the case) from a mixture of hope and of fear, or from reverence (which is a passion compounded of fear and admiration), or whatever be the motive which inspires his action, he is acting not from self-made law and right, but out of regard for the law and right of the State. It is quite clear therefore that the real nature of obedience is to be found not so much in the outward activity, as rather in the inner activity, of a man's soul. Hence he is most completely under the ruler's control whose whole soul and judgment lead him to obey all the State's commands. And he exercises the most absolute sway who reigns over and through the hearts of his subjects. If the opposite were true, viz. that those exercise the most absolute rule who are most feared, then it

would follow that the subjects of Tyrants are the most absolute rulers, for none live in such abject terror as Tyrants do of their subjects.) 35

"Again, although men's souls and hearts cannot be controlled so well as their tongues can be, yet even they are in some measure subject to a ruler's sway, and there are many ways in which it is open to him to make most men believe, love, hate, etc., what he wishes them to do. It is true these things cannot be effected simply by direct command of the ruler. Yet experience abundantly proves that they do frequently come about through the authority of the sovereign's power, and in accordance with his guidance, that is to say, from his law and right. Thus we can, without any intellectual self-contradiction, conceive of men as believing, loving, hating, despising, and being moved by any emotion, solely according to the law of the State" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 17).

Hence every bad action in a civil community, and the consequent necessity of punishing the doer of it, and punishing every one else in heart and purse and insecurity of life, is a testimony to the inefficiency or badness of the laws, or the social organisation of the community, and not a tribute to their excellence. The strength of the State, and the real vigour of its laws, are in the men who gladly obey, and never think they are obeying anything but themselves, just as the men in whom the spirit of Christ most dwelt asked with wonder, "Lord, when saw we thee hungry and fed thee?"

Spinoza believes that every man, woman, and child within the State should be made obedient to its laws, and that this *can* be accomplished by well-devised and well-maintained conditions of existence, which will prompt and enable every one to see and to do what is for his best interest. He does not say this is easy. But he contends that it can be done by the exercise of that strenuous thought which is God's best gift to man. It is a problem which falls wholly and entirely within the compass of man's own intelligence and will. It is his chief blessing if he recognises it, his worst curse if he does not. But in both cases alike he gets and he pays for all that he deserves. For the consequences of his social neglect, ignorance, folly, pride, narrow greed, and ambition come home to every man in the community no less inevitably than do the consequences of his wise laws, prudent industry, steadfast justice and honour. What Spinoza is anxious about is, that we should recognise (1)

that criminals are not born but made ; (2) that they are bad and lawless because they have had little to hope for, or to gain, from being good and law abiding ; (3) that each man must estimate the value of a civil order, and the validity of its laws, by the positive content or good which these bring to himself as an individual ; (4) that punishment does not alter the conditions which make men bad, and does not do anything to supply the better conditions and advantages which are necessary to make them good ; (5) that punishment does as much good as you can fairly expect it to do. It does not go the right way to work for men's true education, and therefore in general it simply gives rise to a necessity for more punishment ; (6) the same solid advantages and interests which have made the great majority of the citizens in the State loyal to it, and made them feel that it is the guardian of all their best endeavour and attainment, will produce the same effect in those who now care nothing for its laws, if the same patient training and uplifting conditions of life and of labour are extended to them.

To this many objections may be raised. One only I shall notice in a word, as it helps to bring out Spinoza's meaning. Does this argument, it will be said, not involve that men are simply the creatures of their circumstances, good when the conditions of their life are favourable, and bad when these are adverse? The answer is, it does involve this, only you must add that the conditions which thus make character good or bad are themselves already character, and it is for this reason that bad conditions of life lead to bad lives. Spinoza entirely denies the separation or distinction between the conditions or content of volition and the volition itself. What are conditions of social life and labour, what are law, government, duty, etc., except ideas, thoughts, volitions in men's souls? A law expresses, nay is, the *character* of the general body of the citizens in the State, because it embodies the kind of life which they will as best for all and for each. If the laws are good, this means that they foster and defend a certain type of existence, and by leading men to care for certain satisfying objects of desire, they inevitably make men loyal to the laws which maintain these. While if, and in so

far as, the laws are bad, they do not put this kind of life within the reach of some of the subjects, and so they deprive the State of the strength and security which it would enjoy if all its citizens felt the law to be the guardian of their interests. Equal justice before the law in the case of a man who has much to lose and little to gain by breaking it, and in the case of a man who has little or nothing to lose by doing so, is a futile determination to treat as equal what you have already made unequal. Men can be made to keep the laws only by giving them in and through the social order of which the laws are the protector, such objects of desire, hope, endeavour, and attainment as will furnish content and dynamic to the good will.

Again, I say the State has a right to punish wrong-doers, but it should always remember that if it needs to do so, it has first neglected its own real duty toward them, and that the majesty of its justice would have been infinitely more revealed in laying down and maintaining such conditions of life and labour as would have made the wrong-doer a law-abiding citizen. For men are ruled by wisdom, not by bolts and bars. To punish a man is the worst use to which you can put him; and if he is simply to return to the old conditions of life you may expect to (and you do) hear of him again. For he at least does not recognise the justness of any penal retribution which is not at the same time a readjustment of the spiritual conditions which have made him the man he is.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE STATE AS ONE MIND.

WE have seen that the primary condition of a political order is that the right and power of each individual who lives under it shall no longer belong to him as an individual, but to the State as an organised whole. The corollary from this which we have just been illustrating is, that this power and right is not transferred once for all, but is inevitably more or less transferred, and not at the option of the individual, but according to the wisdom and prudence with which State affairs are conducted. A wise ruler has the most absolute right and power; a foolish one very little. To rule well *is* to be powerful; to rule ill *is* to have little authority. Neither ruler nor subject can change this law or relation of all government.

Our next problem, therefore, is to discover what powers or rights the State will enjoy when it does its work best, or alternatively, what powers it must, and should have, if it is to realise the end for which it was called into existence.

To begin with, all individual right and power must pass into the hands of the State. To this there is, as we shall see, an important exception. There are certain functions or powers which cannot be transferred, not because it is undesirable that they should be, but because it is impossible from their very nature that they can be. The powers or rights of free thought, free speech, love to one's neighbour, and love to God, all come under this class of exceptions; and will be treated later on. Yet even they are not really exceptions to the principle just stated. For the principle is that the State

should have at its disposal all the powers it can possibly receive and employ. And none of the functions just mentioned can the State receive, or the individual give up even if he wished to do so. I cannot really resolve not to think, not to speak, not to love men or God, except as the State orders me; and even if it does order me to do so, I cannot think or speak or love at its dictation.

What men can and do give up is the right and the power to *act* otherwise than as the State enjoins, or contrary to its decrees. And even when the individual does in the *status civilis* the same action as he would have done in a non-civil condition of life, his right to do it is no longer his own, but one which the State has conferred upon him.

"No citizen can be his own master (*sui juris*). He is subject to the State (*Civitatis juris*), and is bound to obey all its commands. And no individual has any right to decide what is just or unjust, moral or immoral." "The *Jus Naturale* which makes each man the judge of his own conduct necessarily ceases in the *status civilis*." "Each citizen or subject enjoys so much the less individual right in proportion as the power of the State exceeds his own power. Hence each citizen does and possesses nothing by right or lawfully, except that for whose defence he can invoke the common decree of the State" (*Tract. Pol.*, III. 2). In a civil community "each man has so much the less right, the more the power of the rest taken as a whole exceeds his own. That is to say, each man ceases to have any real right over Nature, except that which the right and law of the community concedes to him. And whatever is commanded him *ex communi consensu* he is bound to carry out; and if he does not it is right and lawful to compel him to do so" (*Ibid.*, II. 16). "The Civil Rights vested in a private citizen can only mean his liberty to maintain himself in his *status*, a liberty which is determined by the decrees of the supreme power in the State, and is defended only by its authority" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). "The *Jus Civile* depends solely on the enactments of the sovereign in the State."

What Spinoza wishes to bring out is, that while all right has its origin in individual men who can be social in whatever ways they judge best for them, yet if they judge Civil Rights to be the best form in which they can enjoy and defend their existence, they cannot have this kind of Right without the State, and they cannot have the State without *ipso facto* extinguishing the right of the individual as an individual. He who appeals to Natural Rights in a Com-

munity with settled laws, the State is bound to treat as an enemy, and to defend its citizens against him by any and every means. He who wills to live under a settled political order, and enjoy its advantages of secure life and safe possession and enjoyment of property, and wills at the same time to claim the right to call his property, or even his life, his own, and not the State's, is trying to overthrow the State itself. There can be no half-and-half arrangement here, no question of the State and the individual man entering into partnership, and making a fair divide. The State must have everything, or it will not exist at all. There is no doubt another, and equally important, side to this which will occupy our attention directly. But this is the first point. You need not live within a State if you can do better for yourself apart from it. But if you wish to enjoy the security and peace and property and settled order and family ties which it alone makes possible, then you have no longer any right to claim the power to do with your own property what you please, to live your own life as you please, to bring up your children as you please, to marry or dissolve your marriage at your own option, to carry on your labour or industry in whatever way seems best to you. Every right you have is now a Civil or State-given Right. It belongs to you only as the community thinks it best for the common welfare that you should possess it; and it ceases to belong to you whenever the community judges it no longer best for the public interest that you should have it. If men have private property in a Community, they have it only, and so long, and under such conditions, as the Community judges that such private possession and use most contribute to the strength and security of the whole civil order.

The idea that a man has a natural right to possess, and dispose of, his property as he pleases, is a fond and foolish delusion. (1) Because there would be no property at all, nothing that a man could call his own, without the security and laws of the State. (2) No State ever has, or can, consistently with its own existence, recognise any such right. If it makes property safe and secure for the individual, it also determines what rights he shall have to possess and

enjoy it, what he may and may not do with it, on what conditions it shall and shall not be lawful for him to transfer it to others. (3) The simple fact that every State has the inalienable right of unlimited taxation, and of judging what the public necessities require, is a standing testimony to the primary axiom of politics that all property *is* public property, and that a citizen is simply a trustee. If private property is a better institution than common property, it is so only as the State does, by entrusting its property under well-defined conditions to the energies and the care of private citizens, get more benefit than it would get by trusting it to a few specially-appointed officials. That is, it can only be better because the State in this way enlists the interest, capacity, enterprise, and industry of all its citizens, and thereby makes a much better use of its patrimony and gets much higher returns in the one way than it would in the other. But neither in theory nor in practice is there in a State any private property which is *not* the property of the State. (4) If it be true that "all that a man hath will he give for his life," this of itself disposes of all natural rights within a civil community. For the right to regulate and, if need be, to sacrifice its citizens' lives, is a right which no State can renounce without committing suicide. It may send a man to be killed in battle; it may force every one of its citizens to become soldiers, and take the same risk; it may arrest any man and condemn him to death for acting contrary to its will; it may confiscate all his possessions and put him to death. These are its rights, its functions, its duties. They are the things which it was called into the world to do. And if it does not do them, but makes every man the *owner* of his own life and possessions, and the judge of his own conduct, instead of thereby giving him freedom, it sends him back to that wretched insecurity and barbarism and strife from which he wanted to find, in and through the State, a way of escape.

Spinoza does not indeed believe that every State has fully enjoyed and exercised this power of being the source and the maintainer of all rights within its borders. He sees on the contrary that most States have fallen far short of it.

But his contention is, that the 'eternal truth' of all civil order is to be found in what has just been said. And the proof of it can be derived no less from the States that have allowed rights and powers to grow up in independence of them than in those which have claimed and exercised an absolute sovereignty. For, in so far as they have allowed other authorities—he gives as an illustration, the Guilds in Lower Germany—to raise themselves and claim to divide the sovereignty with them; or in so far as, by neglecting their functions, they have given room for, and necessitated other forms of, organised life which do not recognise their authority, in the same measure have they abrogated and renounced their own proper rights and become less truly States. In losing the power to control and regulate some spheres of their citizens' conduct, they have in the same measure lost the right to their allegiance; and the right which would have been their strength if they had done their duty, becomes their weakness and their enemy when they have not. Thus the principle is no less true in those States which enjoy only a precarious and divided existence than in those which wield an absolute and perfect authority. For whatever authority and power they do have springs from the fact that they can define and maintain and enforce rights and duties; and in so far as they cannot do this, they are lacking in the essential qualities and virtues of States.

What Spinoza therefore tries to do is to discover the essential qualities or powers of a State, that is to say, the powers which it must and will enjoy when it does its work best. He does not say that every State (or what we roughly describe as such) does enjoy or exercise them, but only that there are certain qualities which a State will and must have in exact proportion to its goodness or excellence as a State, and the absence of which will make it no State, and the proportionate absence of which will make it a State more or less good or bad. His point can be illustrated in this way. What are the powers of a pencil, what qualities does it have when it best realises the end for which it is wanted? Let us discover and understand these, and know why one pencil is a good or a bad one. For though we call all pencils, good,

bad, and indifferent alike, pencils, we do not say that they all have the same powers or excellences, but only that in so far as they have the distinctive excellences or powers they are good pencils, while in so far as they do not, they are bad ones.

Hence it is a free State, or a State founded and maintained by free citizens, which Spinoza sets himself to analyse and understand. "The Monarchical State which I set myself to deal with, is that which is established by a free people to whom alone these thoughts of mine can be of any practical service" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 26). He confines his energies in this way, not because he recognises any generic difference between a free State and one founded on force, or on conquest, or on slavery, but because he believes there is no generic difference. A free State is simply a better State, and better because it is stronger, enjoys more cohesion of parts, better security, better safeguards for its own liberty and for the exercise of its citizens' capacities, and enjoys through that higher development of its citizens' powers and patriotism, and through the affection and interest which it is thus able to call forth, a much more stable and enduring existence. Hence we analyse a free State rather than a Slave State, because it displays more fully the peculiar excellences or powers for which all States are called into being and kept in being, but which they embody in very different degrees.

The chief power, or excellence, of a State is that it be one body ruled and directed by one mind. Suppose you have ten millions of men, that means that you have ten millions of bodies needing to be fed, clothed, and housed. This might not be an impossible task if they had only one mind amongst them. But the difficulty is that each body has also a mind of its own, and that each of these ten million minds thinks that it knows best what is good for itself and for everybody else; and though they all are perfectly agreed in this formal unanimity, they are all perfectly at variance when the details of the agreement have to be settled. It is this variety of men's judgments as to the nature of a common good which makes the State (which is, or should be, one mind) a necessity. "For establishing a State, the one necessity is

that the whole power of regulating conduct should be in the hands of all or of some or of one. For the unfettered judgment of men leads them to the most opposite decisions, and every man thinks that he alone knows everything. And it is quite impossible to make all men hold just the same view, and speak in one and the same way. Hence men could not live together in peace unless each man gave up the right of acting solely according to the judgment of his own mind" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 20).

If men with minds so diverse are to form a whole, or "to combine the force of each and all, so to speak, into one body," it can only be by putting the common stock of strength, both physical and intellectual, under the rule of one mind. Only in this way will union be strength, for human beings cannot be united as pieces of clay are, but only through their thoughts, volitions, and affections, that is through their minds. Hence it is always a union of minds or hearts which constitutes the power of the State and the power or right of the ruler. There is no power or right vested either in the Community or in the Sovereign except that which it gets in and through its function as the common mind and will of the people over whom rule is exercised. This inherent dependence of the ruler on his subjects, and of the subjects on their ruler, is one which Spinoza is constantly illustrating and enforcing. The State to him is just this essential inter-dependence. If either side perishes, so does the relation between them, that is, the State is at an end. For the State has no power or right at all except the interest which the citizens have in maintaining it, or the hold it can obtain in their affection and best endeavour. It is their mind, their will, more steadfast in its volitions, more prudent in its forecasts, more wise in its judgment of common welfare, unsleeping in its vigilance, and much less apt to be carried away by passion, prejudice, fear, hatred, or revenge. It is their better mind, their better will, created and maintained to defend each man against his own weakness in intelligence, will, patience, perseverance, honour, strength, and virtue. The State, or the sovereign power in the State, maintains itself so long as it fulfils this end of being the mind and the

will of all ; it is strong in proportion as it does it well ; and it perishes automatically whenever it ceases to be the better will and better thought of its citizens.

"The body of the State should be guided, so to speak, by one mind." "In a State men have common laws, and are all led, as it were, by one mind." "In a civil community it is essential that the people be ruled as if by one mind." "The right of the State is just the power of a people led as by one mind." "The right of the State or of the sovereign power in the State, is simply the *Jus Naturae* itself, which is determined not by the power of an individual man, but by the power of a people directed, so to speak, by one mind. And just as in the State of Nature each man has only as much right as he has power, so too with the body and the mind of the State as a whole ; its right is to be measured by its power" (*Tract. Pol.*, 3, 2). "The rights of the sovereign are determined by his power, and his rights consist mainly in being the mind of the State, by which all should be guided" (*Ibid.*, 4, 1). "What we call the sword in the King's hand, or the rights of the King, is in reality the will of the people, or of the stronger part of the people." "By a State we really mean the right which is defined by the power of the people." "A people living under a Monarchy can enjoy an ample freedom, if only they take care that the King's power means simply the power of the people themselves, and take care also to constitute themselves its protectors. This is the one principle which has guided me in my exposition of the fundamental principles of a monarchical State" (*Ibid.*, 7, 31).

One interpretation of this doctrine should be guarded against. When Spinoza speaks of the State, or the sovereign, as the 'mind' of the people, he is careful to qualify it with the phrase 'as it were,' or 'so to speak.' The reason for this qualification is, that 'one mind' is not to him synonymous with one man. Not only does he hold that the 'one mind' in the State may be a Council, or the whole of the citizens as a political assembly ; but he also maintains that the last is the most perfect of all kinds of government, just because there can be more unity of mind in it than in any other ; and he further contends that the 'one mind' which is the essence of civil rule, cannot possibly mean one man's mind. For what we call unlimited Monarchy is, strictly taken, an impossibility. One man cannot really rule a people, even though he gets the name of doing so. For he cannot himself know the state of his people, or judge wisely what should be done. He has to rely on officials who can

keep him ignorant of what they do not wish him to know, and can give him counsel whose goodness or badness he has no means of appraising. It is they who really rule, because they alone have, in their several departments, the power of forming reliable judgments upon the facts. One man's hands are too small, and his brain too weak, to make it possible for him really to manage, or even overlook, all a nation's concerns. And moreover, to try to identify 'the mind of the people' with the mind of one man is to condemn our principle to barrenness at the very outset. For it was just because the mind of any and of every man was found to be quite unequal to the ruling and guiding of his own affairs wisely and prudently, that men formed themselves into a State, and agreed to be ruled 'as by one mind.' If then we simply proceed to hand over the united strength and right of all to a single man, we just land ourselves anew in the absurd and most uncomfortable condition from which we were trying to escape; nay we worsen our condition, for we give to a man who has not strength and foresight and vigilance enough to manage his own affairs, the impossible task of managing the affairs of some millions of other men as well.

Thus the 'one mind,' or one will of a people, is always a common mind or will; and it is this which enables men to live together and co-operate in a State. "Men in forming a State brought it about that the right to all things which each man received from Nature, they would enjoy as a body (*collective*), and that this right would no more be defined in terms of the force and natural inclination of each man, but in terms of the power and the will of all taken together" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). "Whether the Sovereign in the State be one man or a few men or all the citizens, there can be no doubt that there belongs to the Sovereign power the supreme right to make what enactments it pleases. And, moreover, he who, either at his own option or under the compulsion of force, has handed over to another his power of self-defence has quite given up his natural right, and has made up his mind to yield entire obedience" (*Ibid.*).

But this common mind or will can only be Reason, or the

sense of a common good, which is present in all men in a more or less adequate form. It was already proved in the *Ethics* that in so far as men desire what is a partial good, they cannot unite with one another, while what does hold them together is some true conception of human welfare. This conclusion Spinoza now makes use of. "Men would in vain attempt to unite if they were not willing to seek anything except that which natural inclination prompts, for the laws of natural inclination tend to separate them. Hence they have each had to resolve and agree most firmly to direct all things solely in accordance with the teaching of Reason—teaching which no one ventures openly to impugn lest he appear to be mentally imbecile—and to restrain his natural inclinations in so far as they prompt him to any action which is harmful to another man, and to do to no one what he does not wish to be done to himself, and lastly, to defend the right of another as if it were his own" (*Ibid.*). "The basis and the end of the State is simply that men may escape from the contradictions of natural desire, and be restrained as far as possible within the limits of Reason, so that they may be able to live together in harmony and peace. If this basis be destroyed, the whole structure will forthwith collapse." "A union of souls could not possibly be conceived unless the State had regard in the main to that which sound Reason shows to be advantageous to all men" (*Tract. Pol.*, III. 7).

In order that the teachings of right Reason might have the absolute force of law, it was necessary that each man should give up his natural right, and that every man should transfer this to all or to some or to one" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 19).

Thus it is no accident, but the result of a law of human nature, that the different minds and wills of men cannot agree, or at least remain agreed, in any course of life except that which embodies a true and abiding satisfaction for all. Men cannot long agree in any view except a true one, for while there are numberless ways of speaking falsely there is only one way of speaking the truth. Nor can they long co-operate except for a lasting and intrinsic good or interest.

"In a democratic State absurd decrees are less to be feared, for it is almost impossible for the majority of an assembly, if it be numerous, to agree in an absurd decision." "The fact that in an aristocratic State the sovereignty is vested absolutely in a Council, need not give the people any occasion to fear lest they may suffer oppression. For the will of so large a Council must of necessity be determined more by reason than by passion, because men under the influence of a bad emotion are brought into collision with one another, nor can they be guided, so to speak, by a single mind, except in so far as they seek things honourable, or at least those which have an appearance of being honourable" (*Tract. Pol.*, VIII. 6).

What Spinoza then tries to show is, that the will of the State ought to be taken as the real will of each man even if he has not actually assented to it previous to its enforcement, nay even if he has spoken and voted against it previous to its enforcement. For in a civil order no man's good or welfare is even conceivable except as it is willed and upheld by the great body of the citizens. Individual good or welfare is inevitably mediated by the consciousness of a common good; and that only can, in a State, be good for each man, which is first determined as good for the whole community. It is good for him, or one of his rights, because it is good for all that he should have such a power or right. But he has no right to any freedom or enjoyment except as it is a duty as well as a right, that is, except as the freedom which he claims will give the whole community most use of him, and enable him to contribute in greater measure, and in work of higher quality, to the common stock of mental and moral power.

"We can appeal to experience in confirmation of our view that he who follows, in obedience to the State's commands, a course of which his own judgment would not otherwise have approved, is still acting in accordance with reason. For in Councils, both of a higher and of a lower order, it seldom happens that any resolution is carried by the unanimous vote of all the members; and yet the resolution is put in force as the general will of all the members, the will of those who voted against it no less than of those who voted in favour of it" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 20). "The will of the State should be regarded as the will of each and every man.¹ And that which the State decrees to be just and good should be considered as decreed by each man. And so even though the subject thinks its decrees

¹ The student will observe how many of Spinoza's favourite phrases and ideas are reproduced in Rousseau's social philosophy.

unfair he is none the less bound to carry them out" (*Tract. Pol.*, 3, 5). "Under a civil order it is the common law of the whole State which settles what actions are good and bad, and no one does anything lawfully or by right, except that which he does *ex communi decreto vel consensu*" (*Tract. Pol.*, 2, 19). "A subject is one who, in obeying the command of the sovereign in the State, does that which is for the welfare of the community, and consequently for his own welfare" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16).

Hence men can agree, and live together in concord and peace, only as they recognise the real nature of the end for which each of them is striving; and each State will be inherently strong or weak, as it does, or does not, discern the true nature of human welfare, that is to say, as it has, or has not, regard to Reason, which alone can show what is really or assuredly good.

"The end of all forms of association among men, and of every State, is to enable them to live safely and well." "A *status civilis* which has not taken away the *causes* of revolt, and under which men live in continual fear of war, and where the laws are frequently violated, has little to distinguish it from the state of nature" (*Tract. Pol.*, 5, 2). "When we say that that State is the best in which men spend their lives in harmony, I understand a *human* life, that is to say, a life which consists not simply in the circulation of the blood and other such functions which are common to all animals, but one which consists mainly in the exercise of Reason, the true excellence and life of the soul (*virtus et vita Mentis*)" (*Ibid.*, 5, 5). "Peace is not the absence of strife, but a *virtus* which springs from strength of soul (*fortitudo animi*)."¹ And, speaking of the apparent excellence of an absolute or tyrannical rule for making men live at peace, Spinoza adds, "If slavery, barbarism, and one-man-rule deserve to be called peace, nothing will be more wretched for men than peace. No doubt there do arise more frequent, and more bitter, contentions between parents and children than between masters and slaves, yet it would not make for the welfare of family life to change the right of a father over his children into the right of a master over his slaves, and to treat children as if they were simply slaves. Thus the transfer of all power to one man is the sure road to slavery, not to peace; for peace, as we have just said, consists not in the absence of war, but in the union or concord of souls" (*Tract. Pol.*, 6, 4).

The other point, that only a State which is guided by Reason, and wills and achieves for its citizens that better and more enduring life for the sake of which it was called into existence, has any true unity, strength, or independence

—the consideration of this will occupy us during the rest of this chapter.

To take the question *formally*, first of all. A State, like an individual man, is most its own master (*sui juris*), or independent, or a law and an end to itself, when it acts in accordance with Reason ; for to act according to Reason is simply to know what you really want, or what is for your abiding satisfaction. He who acts from passion does not do what yields him permanent satisfaction, because he does not then know, or will, the objects in which it is to be found. But he who is guided by Reason wills those objects of desire which are in their own nature imperishable and capable of affording true peace and happiness. And in willing these objects, he necessarily also knows and wills the conditions in and through which alone they are attainable. A man is more a law and an end to himself when he, 'in a calm hour,' and with all his wits about him, takes account of all the many elements in which his welfare lies, than when in the heat of controversy, or the gloom of disappointment, he poisons with a cruel word the springs of a life-long affection. This point has already been amply proved. And Spinoza simply extends the same principle to the State. For a community may do well by itself, or it may do ill by itself, no less than an individual man. It may act foolishly, waste its strength and its resources, sap its vigour, destroy its own unity, and seek to feed its citizens 'with the husks that the swine do eat.' It cannot do this without suffering the consequences ; for the consequences are part of the act. But it may do it, and suffer the consequences. And the consequences are, that it will thereby become less and less a law to itself, less and less independent, strong and stable, and will attract to itself less and less of the affection and devotion of its citizens.

"A State is then most *sui juris* when it acts according to the teaching of Reason." "That State is most powerful and most *sui juris*, which is founded on and directed by Reason. And since the rule of conduct which most contributes to one's self-preservation is that which follows the prescript of Reason, hence the State does the best thing

open to it in so far as it is most *sui juris*" (*Tract. Pol.*, 5, 1).

But such formal statements are only useful when we have first grasped what is embraced under them. That is to say, it is not enough to be told that a State, in so far as it is a State, will always be founded on and directed by Reason, or on a common mind or will. We want to know further, what is the teaching of Reason, what content does it supply in this particular case? To tell a man who has fallen overboard to act in accordance with the teaching of Reason is not to afford him much assistance; you will give him a better indication of your meaning if you throw him a rope. Thus what Spinoza proceeds to do is to show that the Reason which prescribes the end, is also the Reason which realises it in and through definite content. It tells us what is best, best, not in the abstract, but in each case. The best for a State is not necessarily the best for a single man, or *vice versa*. The best in each case is relative to and depends on, nay is constituted by, that particular case. And to know the best thing to be done in each instance simply means to understand as fully and completely as possible the circumstances, conditions, and relations of that instance. When men, for example, appeal to Reason for the settlement of a dispute, they do not appeal to any 'faculty,' or tribunal, within the mind of each of the disputants, but simply to the nature of the object or fact about which the dispute has arisen. They appeal to a better knowledge of the thing to settle, and reconcile, a number of partial views regarding it. Thus it is not Reason in the abstract, or as a mental faculty, which makes men unite and remain united, but simply thought revealing to them objects of desire and endeavour which are attainable by them only in this way. A common mind, or common will, or will of the State, has no meaning unless it is the expression of a *conatus* for those ends and satisfactions in which each individual's happiness is really to be found, and also the creation of definite organs and instruments in and through which this *conatus* will find effective and permanent expression.

The next point therefore is to discover the content of this

common mind or will, that is to say, the objects and ends in which it expresses itself. What does it want, and how can it get what it wants? We have found thus far, that it wants a perfect happiness, or to make the most of the powers with which each man is endowed; and we have also found that no other way of achieving this has yet been discovered by human thought or reason, except that of forming and maintaining a State. Hence, although the State is not the absolute end of human desire and endeavour, and cannot claim to have any value except in relation to, and in the measure in which it contributes to, this end, yet it is the most sacred of all the instruments of progress which God has given man the power to devise and to perfect. And its sacredness consists in its power to regulate men's conduct, and to direct their actions in general toward that end or good which constitutes their happiness. But it can accomplish this only in and through laws. For "no State can subsist except through laws which are binding on every man. And if all the members of a civil community refuse to obey the laws, they thereby break up the community and destroy the State" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 3).

The important question of the place and function of law in the State, we shall consider in detail in the next chapter. Here, however, it should be noted that all law is relative to the safety and welfare of the citizens in the State. Each law is a good one, if it fosters this common good, a bad one if it does not. Hence the highest, and, in a sense, the only law in any State is the welfare of its members. All the force, validity, right, power, which any enactment has, comes ultimately from this. If an ordinance does not accomplish this, no matter who enact it, or enforce it, it is no more than an idle word.

"The *salus populi* is the supreme law to which all laws, both human and divine, should be subordinate" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 19). For this reason "those whom the law requires to take an oath will be much more careful not to perjure themselves, if they are called upon to swear by the welfare and the freedom of their country, and by its supreme Council, than if they are required to swear by God. For he who swears by God risks a personal good of which he is himself the valuator; while he who swears by the freedom and the welfare of his country swears by a good which is

common to all the citizens, and of which he is not himself the valuator. And if he perjure himself in this case, he thereby declares himself to be an enemy of his country" (*Tract. Pol.* 8, 48).

For Spinoza the principle that the *salus populi* is the *suprema lex* is so deeply set in the structure of the State that to neglect it, or to subordinate it to any other, is to destroy the civil order itself. It is binding upon the King no less than upon his subjects, and the King has no more power or right to violate it than his subjects have. Spinoza works out his argument along both these lines.

He shows, first of all, that the subjects have no right or power to make any promise or engagement which is incompatible with the peace and security of the State to which they belong, and that if they have made such a promise they have no right to keep it. "Neither reason nor religion teaches us to observe every promise we have made. If, for example, I have promised to keep safe money entrusted to me for secret custody, I am not bound by my promise, as soon as I know or suspect that what was given me for safe-keeping has been stolen. I shall act with more propriety if I take pains to restore it to its owners" (*Tract. Pol.*, 3, 17). Or as it is expressed in other places, the maintenance and the tranquillity of the State are the essential condition of all duties, and so whatever would destroy or weaken this condition itself can be no duty, and a citizen can have no right to do it. No promise has any binding force, if it would violate the very social security which makes any promise worth making or observing.

We do commonly recognise that some promises are not binding. If I promise to kill my neighbour to-morrow, it is my duty to break that promise. If I promise to give a thousand pounds to a benevolent object, and then find that to pay it would reduce my wife and family to beggary, it is my duty not to pay it. If I promise to act contrary to the law, or to assist my country's enemy, it is my duty, when I see my folly, to violate my promise. In such instances almost all would agree that the breaking of my promise was the lesser evil, and therefore, in the circumstances, my duty. But men admit these and other exceptions with the greatest

reluctance, because "if you once begin, where are you to stop?" If all promises are not sacred, and alike sacred, why are any sacred? If you once depart from the obligatory nature of all promises irrespective of what is promised, you seem to open the door wide for any exception whatever, and leave the matter at each man's option.

The strong point in Spinoza's argument is, that all promises and duties are relative to one another, and to the welfare of the State, which is the earthly providence of all its citizens' best endeavour. Promises which are violations of this supreme law are *ipso facto* null and void. Such engagements no one has any right to make, and if he does make them, he thereby declares himself an enemy of the State and of every citizen within it. Thus we can discover why some promises are sacred, binding, and obligatory, while others are not. They are sacred in so far as they are part of, and are recognised as valid by, that civil order within which they must all fall. And they have no sacredness, or binding force, at all, if they attempt to bring about any condition of things which would weaken or overthrow social security and peace.

The same principle, that the *salus populi* is the *suprema lex*, is binding upon the King or the rulers in the State no less than upon the subjects. "For if we have regard to morality and religion, we will see that no ruler can without guilt keep any engagements he may have made which would result in harm to his State. For if he has promised anything which will, he sees, be injurious to his State, he cannot carry out his promise without being unfaithful to the trust his subjects have committed to him. And it is this latter engagement which is most obligatory upon him; and it is this promise to which rulers are wont to promise most sacredly to remain faithful" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). "If rulers would do wisely for themselves and maintain their sway, their chief aim must be to have regard to the common good, and to direct all things according to the dictates of Reason; for violent rule, as Seneca says, never lasts long." And, carrying the idea a little further, Spinoza shows that the welfare of the people is not only the supreme law of every State, but

that even in a Monarchy, where all laws are enacted by the King and enforced in his name, this supreme law should be considered by every one as the King's steadfast and eternal will, even in cases where in a moment of weakness, passion, or folly, he gives some order that conflicts with it. The *salus populi* should ever be treated by all State officials as the King's supreme law (*summum jus*) (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 5), for even where all law is his "unfolded will," not every volition of his can, or should, have the force and efficacy of law. Thus his servants will do better, if they disobey his orders in order to preserve both the State and himself, than if by obeying him they bring the State to ruin, and thereby also put an end to his sovereignty. The significance of this idea we have now to consider.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF LAW.

SPINOZA has realised intensely the truth which Plato and Aristotle grasped, when they spoke of the laws of the State as the freedom of its citizens. For not only does he not regard law as the limit, or restraint, of men's freedom; such an idea never even occurs to him. From his point of view it would have seemed too groundless to deserve refutation. For how could the law be the enemy of, or a foreign yoke imposed upon, men's intellectual and moral endeavour; when all its force, validity, power to command and to obtain obedience, come simply from the souls or wills of these very men? If they do not will it, it simply ceases to be. For the force of all law is not the force of him who commands, but the force of the individuals who obey it, because they judge that that way lies their good or interest. This is Spinoza's ruling thought in this part of his political theory. And it is one of his best points that in no measure or way will he in Politics, any more than in Ethics, recognise any distinction between the individual and society, or between the well- or ill-fare of the individual man and that of the community to which he belongs. All that he has of power, energy, wisdom, skill, virtue, is its property and power and strength. While all that it enjoys of peace, security, unity, power, is from first to last also his. He has nothing which he can call his own except that which the State has no use for. And the State has nothing of its own at all, for all that it secures and enjoys is the common property of all its citizens.

Spinoza indeed recognises that all laws are not equally

good, either in comparison with other laws in the same State, or in comparison with the laws of another State. But he holds that it is quite a mistake to find the explanation of the badness of a law in the fact that it is imposed upon a people against its will. For (1) such a thing is an impossibility. No one does, or can, act contrary to his own will. Even if I obey a law because I know that the strength of a whole nation is behind it, or that public opinion will see it enforced, it is still not the strength or the public opinion which makes me obey, but my own judgment that under these conditions I shall be doing better for myself, or shall get more of the things that I do value, by conforming than by refusing to conform. It is physically possible for me to refuse to obey, even though the whole world tried to make me do so. But if I refuse, I must be prepared to take the consequences, that is, I must be prepared to part with all that can be taken from me—my friends, my good name, my liberty, and my life. Men have been found prepared to take these consequences. Both from the noblest and from the basest of motives they have done it. But such men will of necessity always be very rare exceptions. In almost all cases men will judge obedience more for their interest, and will judge wisely, if disobedience involves the loss of all that they count most dear. But in so judging, they are in nowise constrained or forced against their will. They are simply judging what is best for them under the circumstances. The fact that if the circumstances had been different, that is to say, if other men had not held the opinions they do hold, and had not had the will and the power to make their opinions effective in the way above indicated, the individual would then not have chosen to obey, in no way makes his action, or the judgment on which it is based, any the less his own act and judgment. If, to escape the fury of a mad bull, I jump into a stream to the great danger of my life, I am not forced or constrained either in thought or in action. I am just thinking and doing what my own reason judges to be best for me under these conditions; and though, if the circumstances were quite different, my act would be one of utter folly, this casts no reflection on the act I now do, and on the judgment

from which it comes. 'Circumstances alter cases.' And they do so because they first make the case. A case with different circumstances is a different case.

(2) If it is true that even an individual man cannot be forced, against his own judgment or will, to obey a law, it is still more true of a nation. What could force it? Is it the one man whom we call a tyrant? But what power does he have if the people simply say, we do not care for either you or your laws? His words and his commands become simply wasted breath. The strength of all law is that it is obeyed, and not that it is enacted.

(3) A law is not necessarily a good one though all the people consent to it, nor a bad one though a single man enact it. Its goodness or badness does not depend upon this at all. It is indeed a sign, and even a proof, that a law is good relatively to a particular nation and to its stage of progress, if the people as a body yield obedience to it. For this shows that it embodies and maintains the kind of life and the peculiar interests which they have learned to value. But this is the only reason which proves any law to be a good one. The fact that the people have assented to its enactment, and even the fact that they have themselves devised and decreed it, is quite irrelevant, just as the fact that they have not assented to it, or that it has been devised and decreed by one man, also is. It may not have the force of law though everybody had consented to it; and it may have the force of law though nobody gave any consent. A law has force of law, or is valid, that is, is really a law, only when men obey it. And they do obey it, only when it aims at, and achieves for them, those advantages and blessings which they most value in life.

Spinoza indeed considers a democratic State the highest, or most developed, of all States, and he believes that in it the laws are, on the whole, best enforced and observed. But the reason for this is not, that if people have once made a law or assented to it they are forever bound by it. This is not the nature of the common mind, or common will at all; and he does not believe that a man is bound by any law except as it, and the system of civil order of which it is a

part, do more and better for him than he could possibly do for himself. Hence the peculiar excellence of a democratic State lies not in getting popular consent and approval to its laws, but in the better knowledge which the wisest men in the State can in this way gain of the wants and needs and hopes and fears of those who constitute it. For it is the wisest men in each State who do always rule it, whether they hold the reins of power, as king, statesman, prophet, priest, or philosopher. And the benefit of a democracy is that, while its own knowledge of what it really wants, and of what would be for its happiness and peace and prosperity, that is to say, its knowledge of its own 'real will' is very small,—smaller probably than is to be found in any Monarchy or Aristocracy,—it yet can keep the problem of government before the minds of its wisest men with a wholeness and an impartial obstinacy and insistence which finds a parallel under no other form of rule. Here the people have a voice, and can use it without fear of suffering by using it freely. And while they do not know what would please them or content them, they do always know, as no one else can, that they are not happy. Thus even when they accept a thing, as a child in pain does a box of sweets, thinking this is just what they wanted, and then find that their real troubles are in nowise diminished, it is no real ingratitude which makes them trample under foot the laws they once eagerly consented to. For it is not their business to know what is wrong with them in the sense of knowing how it is to be cured. That is what rulers are for. And if the ruled knew what 'ailed' them they could dispense with their rulers. We call in our doctor to tell us why we are feeling unwell; that is, not to give our trouble a name, but to cure it. And if he recommends something which we would much like to have, but which aggravates our sickness, we are not ungrateful if we say he ought to have known his own business and our 'real will' better than act in this way.

Popular forms of government are not better than others because the assent of the people is the condition of a law's efficiency, nor because a vote of the people is necessarily the voice of God. For Spinoza holds that the only real voice of

God in a nation is the voice of its wisest and most prudent man by whatever title or no title he is known. But democracy is good, because it brings into the open light of day the sores that would otherwise fester and corrupt and destroy the whole State. It prevents rulers making a desert and calling it peace. It prevents them mistaking inertia for strength. It does not breed dissensions and grievances; but when they exist, it allows them to find a voice, and make their appeal for redress to whatever of wisdom God has bestowed on that community. Thus it entirely eliminates that kind of self-deception to which all government is subject, if it is not thus stared in the face by its proper work, and made to feel the difference between fulfilling its functions and enjoying its privileges. There is, in fact, the same difference between a democratic State and a really Monarchical or Aristocratic one, as there is between free citizens who can go and order their boots to fit their own feet, and convicts who have to take what they are given. In the former case the shoemaker is, like the ruler, the man of skill; but yet he is not the ultimate judge of his own work. It is the man who wears the shoe who knows, as no one else can, where the shoe pinches. And if the shoe that has been made for him does not fit him, it matters not that the shoemaker has made it as seemed best to him. For he is not the judge of what is best. It is not he that has to wear it. In the same way, the people always know infallibly, and beyond all controversy, when something is wrong with the conditions of their life. But with this their wisdom begins and ends. To find out what precisely is wrong, what mal-adjustment there is in the body politic, or—what is the same thing—how matters are to be set right, is the work for which we call in men of wisdom and skill and give them place and power. If they begin their work by saying, like some shoemakers of our acquaintance, you cannot really be feeling any discomfort, for this is the proper shape for a shoe, or you do not know how a shoe should be made, since you have never learned the trade, or this shoe was made on the same last as your former one, we have a right to tell them that they are not the judge of whether we are feeling pain or not, and what they were

called in for was not to prove that we should have been quite happy and contented, but to give us the conditions of life and labour which would make us so. If they cannot discover what precisely is the cause of our discomfort, and how it is to be remedied, there is no longer any reason for their office or for their services.

(4) An enactment has the effect or validity of a law, that is to say, really is a law, only when, and in so far as, it becomes an integral and essential part of a nation's life and endeavour; and it becomes this only as it recognises and furthers the kind of life which the citizens in the State think of supreme value. If it link itself to this and serve this end, it is sacred in its majesty; if it do not, it comes still-born into the world. We recognise this in a tacit way, when we occasionally call to mind the hundreds of enactments that never worked, the hundreds more that went to an unregarded grave, and the enactments which we call common law that nobody ever enacted and which yet have grown with the nation's growth and strengthened with its strength. For what else can this mean except that the validity of a law depends on what the law does, and on the goodness of the life which it secures for its subjects; and does not depend in any way whatever on whether one man or a few or all the people have willed to put it in force. It is not the number who will, but *what* they will, that makes and keeps a State a united whole. For men will not long agree, as we already saw in the *Ethics*, to like and will the same thing, unless they all know and seek the highest and intrinsically satisfying objects of desire. Hence the only validity, or force, that any law ever has or can have, comes neither from the majesty of the legislative body which devises it, nor from the royal majesty which enforces it, nor from the people's majesty which assents to it, but simply from the greater or less wisdom which is embodied in it, or from the measure in which it recognises, and helps men to attain, those satisfactions and ends of human desire in which God has ordained that they can alone find their happiness.

It would express part of this truth if we said that a law to be efficacious must be supported by public opinion. And

Spinoza recognises this when he tells us that "laws will not be effective unless they have the support of some common emotion among men as well as of Reason. Otherwise, if, that is to say, they have to rely solely on the help of Reason, they are weak indeed, and are easily overpowered" (*Tract. Pol.*, 10, 9). The full meaning of this we shall see directly. But it should be noted here, that Spinoza is not satisfied with the definition that a law = an enactment + public opinion. His principle 'bites' more deeply into human life, and shows that both of these elements are formal, and derive whatever value they have from something deeper than themselves, viz. that endeavour after, and enjoyment of, a true and abiding good whose nature we analysed in our ethical enquiry. It is because, and in so far as, a law is the means of bringing within the reach of its citizens the best things, that it at once has the force of law, and makes every man who enjoys its advantages eager to defend and maintain it.

Thus the end of all law, and the condition of it being of any effect whatever, is that it shall recognise the higher law which is the condition of its own operation. If it violate the law of its own validity it simply destroys itself. That is to say, unless it aim at, and achieve for its citizens, better conditions of life than those that already exist, it is *ipso facto* of no effect. Whether the citizens have, or have not, assented to it makes no difference. Because they are thinking or spiritual beings, who must always, by the essential law, or essence of their own nature, seek and will a better condition for themselves, and cannot possibly give up better conditions for worse ones, therefore a law which would worsen their condition is inevitably a dead letter. The citizens cannot will it, except as it furnishes a richer content for their life. And if they do not will it, or think it for their betterment, it is no law at all, by whomsoever it may have been enacted.

From this there follow the two main ideas in Spinoza's conception of the function and end of civil law. (a) That the end of all law is what Reason determines as best for every human being, viz. the promotion of morality and of

religion ; for this, ~~as was~~ proved in the *Ethics*, is the only thing absolutely good, and therefore the only thing that will unite men in heart, and keep them united by permanent ties. But (b) civil law cannot accomplish this directly, both because its means, and instruments, and modes of affecting men are not fitted for doing so ; and also because the men whom it has to affect are, as yet, only in part rational, and must have the good life presented to them in forms which they will themselves judge to be better for them. Hence the end of all law is, that each man should learn to know and will the good life for its own sake. But if it is ever to accomplish, or even to make the slightest progress toward, this ideal, it must take men where it finds them, and adapt its instruction and discipline to their capacity or their incapacity, their partial interests and their passions ; for it can only affect their lives for good through those desires, be they high or low, by which they are really moved.

To begin with the first point. Spinoza contends that while the State does not create religion or morality, the necessity of these being even more deep-set in human nature than that of the State itself, yet, without the fostering care of the State, they would have remained like a seed without soil. They would have commanded no reverence, gained no pre-eminence, attained no development. The very idea, and still more the efficacy, of religion or morality as a law, a command, an imperative, a duty or obligation, comes to man only in and through an organised society ; and at each stage of his life it is relative to, and conditioned by, the development, or realised content, of the good life which that society has attained for itself and its citizens.

Thus all regulation of conduct by the State is subordinate to the end, or happiness, which God has inscribed on man's heart. The State cannot make bad or good to mean whatever it pleases. That is not good which the law, or the ruler, likes to call good. On the contrary, that only is law and rule which recognises and lays hold of, and maintains for its citizens, what God has already constituted as their only possible happiness. We shall get many illustrations of

this when we come to deal with the natural limits of government. What needs to be noted here is, that the State is not an end to itself, but only a unique means or instrument. And if it try to constitute itself the end, it infallibly destroys itself. God has not so made men that they can will a State which does not recognise and maintain a law higher and deeper in human nature than any civil law, those conditions which we have already called the "conditions of fear and of reverence," that is to say interest in, and reverence for, the good character and the best objects of human desire.

Hence Spinoza holds that whatever means are necessary, or best, for the attainment of the highest objects of human desire by ourselves and other men, may be truly called the "commands of God." For if God willed, as he has willed, that man should not find his happiness except in and through certain objects and conditions, whatever is needful, or best fitted, for attaining these, is also God's will, or command, or the divine law for man. Spinoza prefers, however, in general, not to use this form of expression, for these two reasons. (1) Because "law" or "command" has become inveterately associated in men's minds with the idea of a yoke or a bondage, an alien and external demand made upon man by some being outside of him. And so that "divine law," or "divine command," which we call religion and morality, is also conceived in this way by all but a few. It is only the few who see that instead of God's law for men's happiness being a yoke, a bondage, a limit, it is their perfect freedom, happiness, power, and peace of soul. If all did so regard it, they would cease to speak of 'obeying' God, or 'giving up' themselves to God, or of it being a 'duty' to serve God, and they would speak of 'loving' God, and of the life of God as their highest bliss and perfection. (2) While the State, and all the intellectual, moral, and social agencies which grow up within the security it gives, are God's will and law for man, they come, not by direct command, but through the thought and will and reason which God has implanted in each and every human being, and implanted in richer measure in some men than in others. But these powers to think out, and the impulse to know, and

to will, a better condition of existence, are just God's best, and, in a sense, his only gift to man ; for they are "the idea of himself" which he has engraven indelibly on every human soul, so that it cannot but seek after him and the better life in which alone he can be known and loved. Thus the impulse in all men to create States, and to establish better conditions of existence, is just the "idea of God" which is the essence of the human mind and will. And "hence the means which this end of all human activities, namely God himself in so far as the idea of himself is in us, requires, may be called the commands of God, seeing that they are prescribed to us, as it were, by God himself, in so far as he exists in our mind. And it is for this reason that the rule of conduct which seeks to realise this end, has the best title to the name "the divine law." Of what nature these means are, and what principles of conduct the attainment of this end involves, and how from these there follow the constitutive ideas of the best State, and the rules which govern men's relations to one another—all this falls within the province of a general theory of Ethics (*universalis Ethica*)" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 4). That is to say, the State maintains itself, and flourishes, just in the measure in which it recognises that it cannot make men think, or will, their happiness, or concord, except in and through those objects and ends which a higher power than its own has made the eternal and inviolable condition of all human happiness.

But, having given this primary truth its rightful place, it is no less important to note that the State has a divine work and function in the world, and that it is the best of all the gifts which God has bestowed upon man, even though it is given only in the form of the thought which can foresee and plan. For the State is the guardian of all man's dearest and best interests. It gives morality and religion the force of law. It has the power to make men do the good before they understand why it is good, or why it should be imposed upon them. It appeals to them through what they do value, and teaches them to know the value of still better objects of desire and ambition. It maintains Justice and Charity in the world, and gives to the dictates of Reason, that is, to the

objects that really satisfy men's souls, that supremacy over the objects of passion and natural desire which their own intrinsic value warrants and demands. This is, in fact, what constitutes the sacred majesty of the State. It rules over men in and for righteousness ; and gives to love, kindness, justice, prudence, wisdom, chastity, mercy, and every moral end that right to dominate over and in all human conduct which their own inherent nature gives them the title to claim and the might to maintain. For if justice, love, wisdom, self-restraint, etc., get force of law only in and through the State, it is the strength they give to which the State owes all its power and dominion in the world. In stooping to espouse their cause it has won for itself a boundless and eternal sovereignty, and become "the kingdom of God upon earth" in and through which God has willed that all his best blessings shall come to men. It has willed to be the patron of the good life, and in its might it lives and thrives.

"Justice and, in a word, all the teachings of true Reason, and consequently love to one's neighbour, receive the force of a law, and an imperative, solely from the law of the State, that is to say, solely from the decree of those who enjoy the right to command" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 19). "Reason teaches us to practise moral virtue, and to strive for a good soul and a heart at peace with itself ; but this cannot be attained save in a State." "If both the good men and the bad within a community have equal reason for fear, the State is necessarily in the gravest peril." "The kingdom of God consists solely in the sway of Justice and Love, or of true Religion. It follows from this that God does not rule over men except through those who rule the State. . . . Our conclusion then is that religion, both when made known to men by the light of nature and when revealed by the Prophets, receives the force of a command solely from the decree of those who have the right to command ; and that God has no special reign over men except through those who govern the State. Hence, divine teaching does not receive the force of an imperative immediately from God, but of necessity from those, or by the mediation of those, who have the right to issue commands and to make laws. And so we cannot conceive of God as reigning over men and directing human affairs in accordance with Justice and Equity, except as he does so through these means. And experience also confirms this. For no trace of divine justice is to be found except where just men are put in authority" (*Ibid.*).

It is thus the State's high duty and privilege to recognise the end for which all men are striving, and which they cannot

help striving after under all conditions, just because they are all constituted thinking beings, and nothing is so difficult to satisfy as thought. The State has to recognise this end and to give it the force of law. But to give it force of law means, as we have just seen, to give men good substantial reasons for thinking that to yield obedience to it is, under all circumstances and conditions, the best thing they can do for themselves. What we call a law has not "the force of law" except when it is obeyed; for every law is made to be obeyed. Every time it is disobeyed detracts from its force, efficiency, and majesty; and the penalties which attend its infringement do nothing at all to vindicate the majesty of the law. They are attached to it simply to give men reasons or motives for not infringing it. If, in spite of these, it is broken, it is a proof not that the penalty should be made more rigorous, but that the law is a bad law, bad either in what it tries to do, or in the way it tries to do it, or in the relation in which it stands to other parts of the whole system of law. The idea that you can force men to keep any laws whatever by making the penalty for infringing them more and more severe, is one of those stubborn fallacies which all the teaching of experience as to its utter futility has only partly dissipated.

The efficiency of law is to be found solely in rendering the enforcement of its own threats unnecessary. And it does this only by recognising that all threats are relative to, and depend wholly for their motive power upon, the positive good or advantage which they can take away from men. If the law threaten to send a jail-bird back to prison if he steals again, the threat affects him very little; because he has little to lose, either in position, in home, in wealth, in friendly ties, or in character. The law may indeed take away his liberty; but, in the main, liberty is simply a general name for the enjoyment of these and other good things in life, and a man may often find more of what appeals to him as real liberty in a prison, if all the friendships he cares for are to be found there, than when he is free to roam about unthought of and unbefriended. If, on the contrary, the law threatens a good citizen with even the mildest of admonitions in one of its public courts, its threat is of the highest efficacy, and never

needs to be enforced, just because the law, and the social order, which is just another name for the law, have given him interests and objects of desire which he does not care to lose. Thus the force and validity of all law is not in the penalties it can inflict, but in the positive welfare and happiness which it puts within reach of each of its citizens, and the positive interests and affections by which it gives them a real hold upon life and upon the social order to which they belong. This is the only way in which it can control and govern their souls, namely through those same processes of education, training, useful labour, and hope of bettering themselves, which have made most of its citizens honest and law-abiding.

This is Spinoza's meaning when he says, that "a people cannot be guided as by one mind, as is essential in a State, unless its laws have been enacted in accordance with the dictate of Reason; and that the laws of the best State must be framed under the guidance of Reason." For only in this case will the common good, which the law seeks to make the bond of union between its citizens, be of such a nature as to really engage their interest, furnish scope and impulse to their energies, and cause them to feel that they are in this way making the best of their lives. But if the law does this, and in so far as it does it, it will be to each of its citizens that better self which keeps guard for him while he sleeps, which reminds him of what it is his interest to do when he would himself forget, which protects him against his own heedlessness, folly, passion, and weakness, and wills for him under all conditions that stable and secure social order which his own inconstancy and imprudence would often, to his own measureless loss, destroy. Thus it is not love of paradox which makes Spinoza call the laws of a State the liberty of its citizens. For the laws do not merely protect each man's freedom, by defending him against the aggression of others, but they are his true freedom, because they are the embodiment of those objects of affection, desire, and interest in which he and others can find true freedom or lasting satisfaction.

(b) This brings us to the second of the points mentioned

above. Law aims at the same end as all moral education, namely to make men good and virtuous; but it can accomplish this end only in its own peculiar way. Its way is in some respects more efficacious, and in other respects less efficacious than that of other moral agencies. But it is hardly worth while comparing its efficiency with that of these others, since they could not exist or do their work at all apart from its efficiency. Hence, even if it had all the defects conceivable, it would still be necessary to will and maintain it as the essential condition of any other moral influence whatever. But it has no defects at all, if we treat it as it should be treated, that is to say, if we conceive it as a thing which is *sui generis*, with its own peculiar function and place in man's spiritual life. For this simply means the understanding of it, and the discovery of what it can, and of what it cannot do. A saw is none the less useful and indispensable though it does much rougher work than a plane. So though law is much more external than family affection or friendship, it still does effectively what neither of these could do, and it does a work without which neither of these could exist, still less attain to any high development. And, if it is limited in what it can achieve, it is only in the same sense in which everything in the world is limited, namely, that it has certain laws, or conditions, of its own activity and effectiveness, and if it is to be what it is, and to do what it does, it cannot also be something else with a quite different nature. Its determination to be this, is also its negation not to be something else. Thus it is quite meaningless to compare the efficiency of a law with the efficiency of family training, or moral education. Each has its own work and excellence, and this is what we have to find out. What can law do and how can it do it best?

First of all, law is not a moral teacher, because it takes account only of outward actions. Its aim is to maintain a certain type of conduct; and if it is to succeed in this, it cannot at the same time either recognise that an action of an opposite type yet had a good moral motive to justify it, nor examine into all actions that do conform to its demands and allow them varying degrees of merit according to the moral

value of the aim that inspired the individual in each case. It must treat all who do the kind of action it requires as good citizens, whether the motive which leads them to do it be the highest or the lowest ; and it must treat all who act contrary to its commands as bad citizens who deserve punishment, even if the motive from which they acted was the noblest possible. In Spinoza's language all that the State can do is to make men "obedient," that is to say, it can lead them to prefer certain actions to others from some motive or other ; but it cannot make them "live wisely," that is, do the actions from a sense of the intrinsic excellence which caused such a type of conduct to be the law. So strongly does Spinoza feel this, that he sometimes speaks as if it did not matter at all from what motive men yield obedience to the laws of the State, if only they do obey. His meaning is, that while the motive is of supreme value as being the real nature of the act, or the act in its full nature, yet this is a thing which the State has no sure way of estimating, and if it attempt this, it will not only fail to accomplish it, but will also, in trying to do what it is unfit to do, neglect the proper business for which it was called into existence. Its proper business is to enforce a certain kind of action, and repress the opposite kind. If it does this well, it does its whole duty, and thereby makes it possible for other influences which can lead men by tenderness, by kindness, by simplicity and sincerity and purity of heart, to get a scope and a security of tenure which enable them also to do the finer and more spiritual work which the State wants done for its own welfare, but for the accomplishment of which civil law is not the fit instrument. The State's direct and immediate duty is to see that men act in certain ways, and to take no account of the moral goodness or badness of the end for the sake of which they individually will so to act. It can safely be thus blind to the moral element in the act, because men cannot be constantly doing a certain type of action without catching in greater or less measure the spirit or motive from which it should be done. The man who acts is also a man who thinks ; and to lead men by some inducement or other to constantly perform a certain kind of

action is the surest way yet discovered of leading them gradually to do the act because of its own inherent excellence or worth. Law can make men do a good act before they do it for the sake of its goodness; and it does not need to press the motive to the front, because it is a necessity of the individual's own nature as a thinking being, that the more frequently the act is done by him the more will the true and full reason why it is intrinsically good, and therefore commanded, become evident to him and operative within him.

Thus the State and its laws, while they should, and can, pay no regard to the directly moral aspect of conduct, can and do put a premium upon moral goodness and upon all the influences that directly aim at this. For, by maintaining secure conditions of life, and by encouraging one kind of action, and discouraging another, they furnish the moralist and the educationist with the conditions which are absolutely essential if their work is to be possible, and the fruit of it permanent. Law is not a moral teacher, and obedience to law is not a moral motive, but if either of these were absent there would be no moral teaching and no moral motives at all. The discovery of the true nature of the good, and the will which wills this for its own sake, are not the beginning but the end of moral evolution; and morality was a 'law' long before it was a life.

This enables us to understand a further point. Not only does the constraint of law extend to actions only, and not to the motives which make them morally good or bad; but further, it does not extend even to all actions. There are bad actions—bad both for the State and for the individual agent—which the State cannot legislate against, because it has no power to prevent them. And if it tries to forbid and prevent them, instead of doing good either to itself or its citizens, it weakens its hold over its subjects by such foolish and ineffectual irritation, and makes them plunge more recklessly into such evil courses to show that here, at least, they are free from the law. That is to say, if you keep too tight a rein even over human conduct, and attempt too much constraint from without, you produce wickedness and not

goodness, licence and not loyalty. This is just another application of the principle we have already considered, namely, that men are really ruled only from within themselves, and so they always obey a law, not because of its penalties, but because, and in so far as, they feel that the law is not a simple, and useless, and therefore irritating, restraint upon them, but is the embodiment of some advantage or interest for them. It is this positive satisfaction which a good law always brings with it that makes men refrain from the opposite kind of conduct. It is the reason or cause why they obey ; and if it brings them no such positive welfare, they have no right to obey it, for the individual has no right to allow his conduct to be regulated by any one else, except as that other shows that he understands the man's welfare better, and has more power and will to achieve it for him, or to enable him to achieve it for himself. Hence all merely negative laws, *i.e.* laws which do not 'bring gifts unto men,' are futile and foolish. They are not merely ineffectual, but they discredit the whole system of legal constraint in whose name they make a vain appeal to men's souls.

This is why sumptuary laws, laws against drunkenness, luxury, envy, avarice, games, plays, etc., are so ineffective and hurtful. Such laws are always bad and useless, because they attempt to do something which they have no power to do, and thus, instead of helping to maintain the majesty of the law, they tend to make men think its violation a matter of course, and therefore of no real moment. Such laws are bad, in general, because they simply *forbid* certain things, without furnishing the necessary positive counteracting motive which will make the citizens feel that they are simply giving up a lower satisfaction for a higher one, and that they are doing so in the strength of that better life which the law secures to them. It is, therefore, not the 'thrawnness' of human nature which makes it cling stubbornly to even such a wretched satisfaction as strong drink or money can afford, but rather that divine impulse which absolutely prevents any man giving up the poorest of what he thinks his joys, except for the actual possession of what appeals to him as a fuller joy. And it is not an 'innate perversity' which makes us

"ever strive for what is forbidden and desire what is denied us"; it is rather the divine law of all human endeavour, which gives us no power to refrain from anything we like and desire, except as we gain the power to lay hold of something that we like better.

Hence the laws just mentioned are bad, because they have not "the force of law," that is, are not really laws, since men in general are not controlled by them. And they are lacking in the force of law, either because they attempt to forbid what is not really bad for men (and which human nature therefore cannot possibly give up), for example recreation; or else because they attempt to cure by direct and negative means, for example by making drunkenness a penal offence, what cannot be cured in this way at all, but only by changing the general social conditions which make drunkenness an overmastering temptation to some, and to others a form of enjoyment which does not even present itself as a possible temptation. To cure the drunkenness, you must first cure the 'drouth.' And the 'drouth' is the dominating impulse, because the man has not been really taught to know and care for any higher or richer form of satisfaction. Unless these conditions are altered, the law might as well tell a starving man not to steal, as tell men under these conditions not to get drunk. In both cases its hold over them is in precise proportion to the richness and fulness, or rather the emptiness and the wretchedness, of the life which it has put within their reach. Rulers are loath to take in the truth of this, or to see that the multitude of offences against a law, and the constant re-appearance of the same old offenders, simply show that, in attempting to make a nominal justice effectual, they are shutting their eyes to that real justice which should be the life and soul and inspiring energy of every one of the citizens. They are trying to do by brute force what God has ordained can only be done by brains and by wisdom. For after all, it does not need very much wisdom to tell that a man who had little reason for being honest was much more likely to commit an offence against the law than to keep it. But to spend our best strength on trying and sentencing offenders, on chronicling their crimes,

registering their follies, calculating how often they will be convicted in a stated period, making up elaborate statistics of the number and the prevalence of offences against the law, and lamenting the human depravity thus revealed, is just to act with the vain boastfulness of the spendthrift who, not content with wasting his means and ruining those who trusted him, spends some more of his creditors' means on publishing to the world a full and accurate account of his own helplessness and incapacity. If a tithe of the money, patience, organisation, heart, and head that are spent on proving how inefficient the law is in controlling men's *minds*, and how necessary it, therefore, is to control their *bodies* and make them emerge from their punishment the weakened and degraded and helpless beings they necessarily do thus become, were spent on devising interests and conditions of life and labour that would engage those divine powers with which every human being is endowed, those who now are the curse and the pest of society would become its strength and its glory.

The omnipotence of the law is a very grand phrase. But until law-makers learn that God has laid down within even the meanest of human beings conditions before which the omnipotence of law is helpless, they will not recognise wherein the true honour and dignity of their office consist. He alone knows what the law can do, who sees clearly what it cannot do. And the man who thinks it can do anything, if only you make the penalty heavy enough, shows how little he understands human beings and the material which he is set to turn 'to shape and use.' For you will make nothing of a man, any more than of a block of wood, unless you take trouble to understand his nature. You can only govern him through his own judgment of what is best for him.

"He who tries to determine everything by law will foment crime rather than lessen it. Things which cannot be prevented must necessarily be allowed, even though some disadvantages may often arise therefrom. How many evils arise, for instance, from luxury, envy, avarice, drunkenness, and such like things. Yet these must be submitted to, because they cannot be prevented by any legal regulations, although they are undoubtedly vices" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 20). The authority

of the rulers "will only be able to ensure the preservation of the constitution of the State, and thus to prevent the infringement of the laws, and to secure that no one shall have anything to gain by violating them. But the authority of the rulers will not be able to prevent the spread of those vices which no law can prevent, such vices, for example, as men of abundant leisure fall into, and from which the ruin of the State not seldom ensues. For men living under peaceful conditions, and free from fear, gradually pass from a state of barbarian fierceness to a civilised and refined state of existence; and refinement leads to effeminacy and indolence. And then men strive to excel one another not in all manly virtues, but in pride and luxury. They begin to think themselves too good for the customs of their fathers, and to adopt those of foreign nations; that is to say, they begin to make themselves slaves.

"In order to prevent these evils, many attempts have been made to frame sumptuary laws. But these attempts have never succeeded in their end. For all laws which can be violated without doing any one an injury are laughed at. Nay, so far are they from doing anything to control the desires and passions of men, that, on the contrary, they direct and incite men's thoughts the more towards those very objects; for we always strive for what is forbidden, and desire the things we are not allowed to have. And men of leisure are never deficient in the ingenuity needed to enable them to outwit laws framed to regulate things which cannot be entirely forbidden, such as feasts, pastimes, expensive tastes, and other such things. For in these it is only excess which is bad; and excess cannot be determined by any general law, seeing that it must be determined in each instance by the amount of a man's wealth.

"My conclusion, then, is that those vices which are commonly bred in a state of peace, of which we are here speaking, can never be directly prevented, but only indirectly. That is to say, we can only prevent them by constituting the State in such a way that most men will, not indeed live with wisdom (for that cannot be secured simply by law), but will be led by those emotions from which the State will derive most advantage" (*Tract. Pol.*, 10, 4-6).

This brings us to the second reason, why law cannot pretend to be directly a teacher of morality, namely because the men on whom it has to work are not yet capable of always apprehending and willing the Good for its own sake. They do, indeed, always will the Good so far as they think or understand it. But they *can* think it as yet only under the form of some advantage which expresses it in a partial and inadequate way; and their willing even of this is variable and dependent on their change of feeling, emotion, and energy. They could not, by their own volition, maintain

that steadfast devotion to the good life which is always the welfare of each man.

Spinoza holds that if men could trust themselves always to know and to will the good, that is to say, if they could trust themselves always to act quite rationally, the State and its laws would not be needed ; for the end at which both the State and the law aim, in a highly laborious and more or less external way, would already be accomplished and maintained without their aid. But moral achievements are not so easy either to accomplish or to maintain. Men are very far from being rational beings in the sense of never willing anything but the best both for themselves and for others. And no one is so resolute in his faith in righteousness, so sleepless in his vigilance, so rigorous in his judgment of his own conduct, and so considerate in his judgment upon the conduct of others, that he needs no guide but his own 'conscience' or reason. The very fact that the State is a necessity of every man's moral endeavour is itself conclusive proof that he is yet very far from 'willing the Good for its own sake.'

For while the State does, as we have seen, aim at a moral end, it assumes, and rightly assumes, that men are as yet very imperfect moral beings, who can see the good only in some interests and desires and objects. They are moved, in Spinoza's language, by their passions ; and when they see one object or end intensely they are blind to, and unaffected by, others no less essential to their welfare and happiness. But men can recognise that their nature is thus one-sided, partial, abstract in its desires and ambitions. And it is just because they do this that they will the State. For the State stands for the wholeness and balance of human endeavour. It has to allow room for, and maintain the exercise of, those qualities, powers, interests which are needful for the true realisation of any individual's happiness and prosperity, but which each man would, in his haste, heedlessness, enthusiasm, or intense devotion to a single end, neglect and even sacrifice. Such a neglect or sacrifice would be to his own infinite loss, but he himself does not at the moment see this. And, perhaps, it is even a necessary condition of individual

progress, that he should be thus momentarily blind to all except that which directly subserves the end or aim which most absorbs him. He does his best work in one cause, when he gives himself heart and soul to it. But if this abstractness and specialisation are to be possible for the individual, the thousand other interests apart from which his own would be unmeaning must also be maintained in full exercise and efficiency. These, no doubt, must be willed and maintained by other individuals no less intensely interested in *them*, for the State has no life or energy except in the thought and devotion of its citizens. But yet the State is not simply the sum of all these diverse interests; it is their unity. It wills not only that each of them shall exist and be maintained, but that they shall all exist as parts of, and elements in, one harmonious and balanced life.

Hence, to the man lost in a single cause, the State or the Law presents itself as an obstacle, a thing without heart or enthusiasm. But it is the obstacle without which his cause would be but a madman's vision. For it represents the sanity of human existence. It is like the fly-wheel which checks the fitful and uncertain motions of each part, that it may give weight and momentum and steadiness to the whole. The religious enthusiast sees no reason why the State should not lend itself to his cause, and allow him to convert men for their good by any means whatever. Surely any means is justified, if the end is to save men's souls; and why, therefore, should the law not compel them to come and hear his message? Why should it not force them by penalties to profess the true faith? Surely every measure is lawful in so holy a crusade? No, every measure is not lawful, simply because this end is only one of the inter-related interests of man's existence. The love of home, the joys of friendship, the highest arts and no less the lowest crafts, the passion for knowledge, interest in men and in things, education, recreation and amusement, sound sleep, good food, good health, stimulating and witty conversation, hopeful conditions of labour, and so on, are all elements which are also essential to human welfare, and worthy of man's devotion, because they also are

God's gifts, gifts which enable man to preserve the equilibrium, and to recuperate the exhausted energies, of his nature. Without the kindly human labour which prepares his food, and the thoughtful regard which sees that his shoes are mended, and his body protected against the cold and the rain, without the considerate reminder of the policeman that he must not obstruct the street, and the gentle hint of the tax-collector, that, while he is busy saving men's souls, children are being born into the world whose births need to be registered, the poor are perishing for lack of food, the thieves are on the alert to steal his property, the enemies of his country are watching to take away his liberty,—without these, and a hundred other influences, which are the complement of his own activity and interest, what he attempts would be entirely futile or rather impossible. In doing for him what his blindness of eye, and narrowness of heart, and absorption of interest, do not allow, or enable, him to do for himself, the State acts the part of a wiser providence, and keeps him from parting company with that wider circle of human endeavour which seems to himself the hindrance to his work, but really constitutes the need for it and is the condition of its success.

Hence the law has to make each man recognise that the form in which he wills his own good—what we call his work, his wages, his place or station or interests in life—is necessarily correlated with, and inseparable from, all the other forms or interests in and through which the other members of the same society will and seek their good. If the law does this well, it is doing, not only for other men, but also for the individual himself, the highest of services. But how can it accomplish it?

It cannot accomplish it at all by appealing directly to his reason, his conscience, his patriotism, his sense of religious duty, his love of his fellowmen; nor even by proving to him theoretically that his welfare and happiness are quite unattainable apart from the well-being and happiness of others. Spinoza, indeed, regards such an appeal, and such a proof, as of the highest intrinsic excellence; nay, he holds that when men are moved to right action in this way they have attained

the highest development of character, and will, and reason, which is open to human nature. But he also insists that it is the *highest*, and for that reason, the latest. It is the most mature fruit of human thought and will, and is, therefore, to be found realised only in a very few. To assume that men in general can, in this way, be really moved to will the good life for its own sake is to commit a fatal mistake. If men could be influenced to right conduct simply by presenting before them the ideal life as Reason reveals it (and as it was presented in Chs. 10 and 11), they would be *ipso facto* free from law, because they would do, without its help, those very duties which it exists to bring to their notice, and would do them much better than law can ever secure that they shall. But the continued existence of, and necessity for, law as the guardian of the best will and best thought, or as the common mind, of all the citizens, shows that all men need sometimes to be reminded of their duties, and that many men need a forcible reminder.

What is the nature of this reminder, and how does it succeed in inducing men to will all the conditions necessary for their own usefulness and happiness? We have already seen that the cause of its success is not the threats and penalties which are attached to the law, since every offence which makes it necessary to enforce the penalty is a proof that the law has failed to accomplish its real end. We have also seen that the binding force and the effectiveness of every regulation of conduct are to be found rather in the positive good which such a regulation bestows upon men than in the evil against which it warns them. That is to say, a law is only truly efficient when it works in and through men's souls. And their souls can be controlled only by enabling them to grasp what appeals to them as a better satisfaction or a greater happiness. The power to make a man's body useless to himself and to the community, when you have failed to understand his soul, is a very poor satisfaction, and should in each State be regarded as a sign of the impotence, and not of the power of the law.

From this the answer to our question comes. For this involves that if law is to command respect and obedience,

that is to say, if it is to have stability and force of law, it must, on the one hand, embody the best thought and wisdom to be found within that community, and, on the other, it must present the good life which this wisdom has conceived in such forms that each of the citizens, whether he be wise or foolish, educated or uneducated, cannot help judging that the advantages which the law brings him are much greater than any he could get by violating it. Spinoza regards the second of these points as no less important than the first, even when he treats the first as the more fundamental. For while a law will be of no use, unless it is wisely conceived, in the sense of embodying a true and abiding good for human life, it will be of equally little use if it simply presents this good in the form of a religious or moral ideal. If it does not adapt itself to the manifold natures and interests of the men whom it is meant to control, it will be no law at all; for an ideal of conduct which men may indifferently have regard to, or neglect, has not 'force of law.' If the good life is to mean anything to the great mass of men, it must come to them clothed in those advantages, comforts, joys, hopes, and interests which they have already learned to value. It must not merely tell them that they will do better if they love their neighbour as themselves, but it must bring this home to them in the form of more money, better houses, more comfort, a better existence; and it must ensure that these good things shall come to them *only* along these lines of better will, better thought, etc.

Not only does Spinoza believe that the moral ideal is in no wise degraded, or contaminated, by being thus forced to mingle with the common crowd of man's hopes and fears and loves and hates; he even constitutes himself the preacher of a Holy Crusade, the end of which is to bring the moral ideal down from the cloud-land in which philosophers and theologians had placed it, and give it an immanent activity in the motives and aims by which men are really moved. A man's desire for more money, for a better position, a better house, better education for his children, for honour, for recreation,—all of these are the moral end, or the *summum bonum*, working in and through man's nature. He who

despises the good in these forms will not recognise it under any other. For, while it is true that these are not the highest forms in which the good can be desired, they are forms of the good, and the only forms in which it will ever appeal to, or be operative in, the great mass of men. Those who are content to will the good life solely because it is the highest end of all existence, and to will it though it bring with it poverty, hardship, contempt, and incessant toil, are the few rare spirits whom the love of God or of truth for its own sake has freed from every human law. But such men will never be other than very rare exceptions. And to count on men in general conceiving and willing the good in this form is to pitch the ideal so high that there might as well be, for them, none at all.

Spinoza contends that not only must the moral ideal be brought down from heaven to earth, and made to do its work in, and through, the desires and motives of common men; but also, that when thus degraded it is really exalted. For it was in this way alone that the moral end became the reality it is. Men willed the good under the form of better conditions of life and labour, more money, a more honourable position, long before they willed an absolute good; and in this way the good life gained a definite content and meaning, which won for it a permanent hold on men's affections and endeavours. Morality in the form of laws regulating men's social life and labour, was a reality and power in the world long before the conception of morality as a subjective principle had even presented itself. It is for this reason that the work of practical statesmen gets, from Spinoza, such high recognition. They have not been ashamed to study the motives through which men's lives are really governed, nor to adapt their methods to these. They have not separated the ideal life from the actual life of men. But, adapting their methods to the material with which they had to deal, they have gradually built up a stable and secure order of life, a system of rights and duties, which the great body of the citizens feel it to be their interest to maintain. In this way, they have really given morality or the good life the force of law, and secured for a certain type of conduct the abiding

support of men's practical endeavour and interest. They have not only proved theoretically that it is better to be ruled by love than by hate, but they have also proved it practically to each man in the way which most appeals to him.

This skill and power to adapt the ideal life to each man's hopes and fears is one of God's best gifts to men. For only in this way does that ideal become effective and operative. Goodness which does not appeal to men as the love of home, secure conditions of existence, honour, wealth, etc., will remain quite empty and ineffectual, for these are part of the content of goodness. And it is this work which the statesman and the legislator do. They take men as they are, narrow and partial in their views and interests, moved by their passions, able to perceive the equity of no measure which diminishes their property or lowers their standing in the world, and, using these motive forces in the interest of the better life, they lead men to will through their narrow interests a good or welfare which inevitably broadens their interests and views. This Spinoza regards as a divine work, however much it may be depreciated by the moralist. For if the motive from which men are thus led to will and do the good, is not the highest, it is at least a real, motive. And if one refused to recognise the good, except when it was done from the highest motive, then goodness would never have existed at all. The separation of the end of human endeavour from the process by which alone it can be conceived and attained is the fatal mistake against which Spinoza is always warning his readers; for it necessarily brings with it a separation of goodness from all that constitutes the good life the immanent impulse of all men's striving to be, to do, and to get the best he can.

Thus a moral ideal which is too good to act on the man who wants more money or more honour through those inducements that will appeal to him, and insists on first extirpating these desires in order to make room for itself, is waging a futile war against the laws of human nature ordained by God. For men cannot be made better, except through their own thought, desire, and judgment. However

narrow and partial these may be, you must learn to do all moral reformation in and through them. By understanding and employing them, you can make them more true or adequate to human good ; but, except as you do so, you can accomplish nothing. This is what civil law, and that stable order of social life, which is but another name for civil law, have accomplished. It is their undying honour that they have enabled men to think and to will an ever more and more complete good or welfare for themselves and for others. They have bent to conditions they could not change, and have led men through whatever motives were really operative within them, to seek, and to realise, a truer welfare for all. In this way they have evolved the real nature of the good by giving men a practical demonstration of the advantages, joys, blessings, which it inevitably brings with it ; and men now will the good, not in the abstract, but as realised in a secure and stable order of life which prompts and enables them to do the best for themselves, and prevents them in the moment of weakness, indecision, folly, or anger, from giving rein to their lower nature. The State rests on force, but it is the force of each man's better nature, or reason, even when it seems most a restraint. And the State works in and through men's passions, but it does so, to lift them thereby to a higher level of thought and will. In this way it has given to morality, and to the dictates of right Reason, a firm hold on human nature, and a high place in the world, which they would otherwise have failed to achieve. It has made physical strength, and all the particular interests and desires of men, into moral instruments which have become in turn its own weapons of power and security.

“ Men are subject to emotions which far exceed human power or *virtus*. Hence they are often moved by different interests, and opposed to one another. Yet they stand in need of one another's help. If, then, they are to live in harmony, and be mutually helpful, it is necessary for them to give up their Natural Right, and make secure provision against any one doing anything to another's hurt. And in what way this can be done, namely, that men who are necessarily subject to emotions, and inconstant, and changeable, may be able to live together in security, and to trust to one another's fidelity, is evident from what we said in Prop. 7 of this part, and in Prop. 39 of Part 3. For, we there pointed out that no emotion can

be restrained except by an opposite and stronger emotion, and that only the fear of greater loss will prevent a man inflicting loss on another. On this basis a Society can maintain itself, if only it claim for itself the right which each man enjoys of being his own avenger, and of judging of good and bad. In this way, it will have the power of prescribing general rules of conduct, and enacting laws, and making them effective, not by Reason which cannot restrain the emotions, but by threats. And such a Society, maintaining itself through its laws, and enjoying the power to preserve its existence, is called a State ; and those who are defended by its law, are called citizens" (Part 4, Prop. 37, Schol. II.). "It is foolish for any one to require another man to make an eternal compact, if he does not at the same time take measures to secure that the man who breaks the compact will, by doing so, lose more than he will gain. This is a point that must have the utmost attention in the establishment of a State. . . . Thus even though men, when they promise and covenant with one another, give every proof of their sincerity ; yet no one can depend on another man's fidelity unless he have something else than such a promise to rely upon. For every one may, by Right of Nature, act guilefully, and is not bound to keep his covenants, unless from the hope of a greater good, or the fear of a greater evil. But, as we have just shown, Natural Right means simply the power of each man. Hence whatever of each man's power is transferred, either by force or with his own will, to another, so much of his right does he also necessarily transfer to that other. Thus, the highest right over all men will belong to him who has gained the highest power through which he can control all by force, and by the apprehension of the severest punishment which all men universally fear" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). "All know to what wickedness men have been led by dislike of their present situation and the wish for change, by headlong anger, and frequently by despised poverty, and how deeply these emotions enter into and vex their souls. Thus to obviate all these, and so to constitute the State that crime and deception may not be possible, yea to order everything in such a way that all men, whatever their disposition be, shall put the public welfare before private advantage, this is a work and a heavy task" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 17).

The civil order, then, is a skilfully-devised system of rights and duties which is designed (1) to lay hold of, and influence, men through those narrow interests or judgments of human welfare which they *have* learned to value ; and (2) to correlate and inter-connect these narrow interests (which we call the passions) in such a way that no man in the community will find it possible to realise his own desire without thinking and willing it through a wider social welfare. These two points Spinoza develops with some

care. In connection with the first, he shows that law should work through men's passions, and must do so if it is to have 'force of law'; and, in connection with the second, he shows that law must, if it is to be stable and permanent, rest upon Justice and Equity. These two points we shall illustrate briefly.

(1) Law must stoop to conquer. It must accommodate itself to the common hopes and fears, loves and hates, likes and dislikes, and even to the prejudices of men. And its highest glory is to do this well, in the interest of each and of all. The ideal life at which it aims must be evolved by slow and gradual stages out of the common working motives which operate in the least enlightened and moralised of men. Law must rule the sensualist and the miser no less than the saint and the philanthropist; and hence it must employ those motives which alone will appeal to the former, no less than those which will influence the latter. In doing this, it is in no way degrading either its own high office or that ideal life in the interest of which it works. Rather, it is doing a divine work in the world, when it refuses to abandon even the sensualist and the miser to their own narrow and inadequate conception of good; and it is simply recognising a divine law in human nature when it forces them to will a larger and better good through those very interests and desires which appeal most powerfully to them. Thus the weapons of its warfare are not carnal but spiritual, even when they are the same weapons as ambition, pride, love of money, or love of ascendancy have already forged in their own interest. For law now turns these very weapons against the narrowness of the thought that created them, and so makes them the most effective of instruments for proving the partial nature of that conception of human good from which they arose.

Thus it is, for example, a characteristic feature of human nature "that each man seeks his own private advantage with the utmost eagerness, and judges those laws to be the most equitable which he believes to be necessary for maintaining and increasing his own possessions; and also, that each man will defend the cause of another only in so far as

he considers that he will by doing so establish his own more firmly." This trait of human nature neither the law nor the law-giver can change. To fight against it, is not only Quixotic, but it is to fight against God who has made men so that they *cannot* think or will anything as good or just or right which will not further what they regard as their own welfare. But, while the law-giver cannot alter this law, he may recognise it, and find it one of the best weapons in his armoury. For he can so arrange the conditions of life in the State, that a man will find that he does infallibly gain most—in wealth, in security, in honour, etc.—when he does those things which make most for the welfare of the whole State.

Similarly, unwillingness to part with money is a very human trait. This no law can eradicate. But law may enlist this 'line of resistance' in a higher interest. It will, for example, be one strong motive for leading men to prefer a citizen-soldiery to the expensive luxury of mercenary troops, a luxury which is most dangerous to the welfare and peace of the whole State. Or, law may control the love of money by bringing into play a motive which is, in most men, even stronger than it, namely the love of honour. Men are not willing to part with money, except as they get what they consider something better in return. But almost all of them do think public position, and honour, and rule something better than money; and are not only willing, but most eager, to spend their money under the influence of this stronger passion. "Laws can never make men eager to live wisely. All they can do, is to induce them to follow those emotions which are of most advantage to the State." Thus while the State cannot prevent that love of money which is ever present in all men, it can control it, and make it subservient to the public good, by framing its laws in such a way that men will value wealth only for the sake of higher things, for example, honour or public office or power.

In the same way, Spinoza points out that the love of honour, which is deep-seated in all men, cannot be denied its satisfaction; but it can receive satisfaction in and through those objects which will be most for the general advantage:

and this arrangement will, of itself, prevent it seeking in objects and ends that would be detrimental to the State, the satisfaction which it *will* have in some form. "There can be no greater inducement to virtuous conduct than a general hope of attaining honour, for we are all very deeply moved by ambition." So the desire for power, which is inherent in all, may be so utilised as to lead a man to work for the advantage of his own city, and through it to benefit the whole State. Again, the licence and arrogance and laxity which are apt to arise in men who are elected to their offices for life can be prevented by electing them only for short periods; in which case the fear of not being re-elected, or of being called to account by their successors, will be a wholesome spur to their diligence, and a wholesome check on their pride. In the same way, the corruption which is apt to arise in a supreme Council will be prevented, if the number of members is large, and there is a constant circulation of new members by the others having to retire at short periods. The use of the ballot, or secret voting, will prevent the ill-will which would otherwise arise, and will give men perfect freedom to vote as they please; it will also be a security against unjust sentences. Again, if in any particular case it is an advantage for men to hold office for a lengthened period, then they should be numerous, else corruption will arise amongst them; while, if it is an advantage that they be few in number, then their term of office ought, for the same reason, to be made short. Again, if any duty is to be well done, either by a ruler or a subject, you must make such arrangements that the man who does it well will infallibly get better remuneration than the man who does it badly or neglects it. Unless you do this, you are putting a premium on dishonesty and negligence of which you will necessarily reap the fruit. "The rulers in an Aristocratic State should have no fixed salary. Their emoluments should be so arranged, that if they govern the State badly they will of necessity be heavy losers. It is only fair that they should have some remuneration for their work. . . . But as no one is vigilant for the interests of others, except in so far as he believes that thereby he is furthering his own, things must

necessarily be so ordered that the ministers of State will then be doing most to advance their own interests when they are most vigilant for the good of the community" (*Tract. Pol.*, 8, 24). So proper remuneration and secure tenure of office will prevent the Judges perverting justice, and so 'making hay while the sun shines'; while it will prevent them lapsing into the ease of settled security, and the indolence which life-long tenure of office is apt to produce, if their income is made dependent on the amount of work they actually do. Similarly, the emoluments of the Senators should be of such a nature that they will always derive more advantage from peace than from war; for as peace is desirable for the State as a whole, it should also be made the interest of those who control its affairs.

Even those emotions which we generally call bad, the State will best master and control, if it takes pains to make them the guardians of those arrangements which exist to realise higher ends. In this way it will make them fight for their own gradual extinction, and will accomplish by wisdom, or if you like by astuteness, what it could not accomplish by any direct attack or prohibition. As illustrations of this we may take such statements as these. "Even the contentions that would arise in a well-constituted State regarding who should, in a crisis, be appointed dictator would be of service, as they would force all to return to the fundamental laws of the State." "The fact that the Syndics, in acting as the guardians of the laws, will almost necessarily incur the dislike of the Patrician rulers, will tend to make the Syndics rely all the more on the people; and so they will discharge the duties of their office with all the more courage and fidelity." "The common emotions of men, such as ambition, envy, etc., may be so directed as to be the support of the good institutions of a State." "The ill-will which would arise from the breaking of a law will be a safeguard for its observance."

Thus the civil order is, from one side, a highly ingenious and successful government of men through those very passions, low or high, which most move them. It despises no weapon, or motive, by which a human being can be

really influenced. And if it does do so, it is neglecting its duty. For its business is to control every man, and to rule him through that which most affects him. If it simply presented an abstract ideal of life to men it would do nothing to help or elevate them. It must embody this in a form which each man can understand and value; and in doing this, the wisdom of the man of the world, and every other kind of skill or cleverness, should be another instrument in its hand. But the justification of all this is, that it in this way aims at, and succeeds in, making men will what most appeals to them through an order of life which embodies the good or welfare of the community as a whole. And thus, in order to get what they want, men are forced to want and strive for a much wider good than they would otherwise have conceived or desired. Law takes those passions which, as we have seen, are always inadequate ideas or judgments of human welfare, and attempts to make them more adequate and true. It lays hold of men by whatever they themselves have really understood of the nature of happiness. And because it has had the good sense not to despise 'the day of small things,' it has more and more succeeded in making Justice and Love the supreme force in the life of almost every one of its citizens, by teaching them that no partial interest can flourish except as it is an element in a stable and secure order of social existence.

(2) The other point to which this leads us is, that law can thus be the reconciliation and transmutation of the passions and partial interests of men, because it recognises a general welfare, definable in terms of Justice, Equity, Religion, and Morality, which, as we saw in Chap. XI., "is necessarily good for human nature and therefore for each man." The end at which it aims is the real welfare of each of the individuals who constitute the State. Thus when it regulates his conduct by principles and rules which apply to all the citizens, it is simply making him see the nature of the good he is seeking, and the conditions of its attainment, instead of allowing him to rush blindly upon his own ruin. For the only things "which do beget concord among men are those which fall under Justice, Equity, and Honesty."

These very terms may be said to have meaning only in and through the State. In a state of Nature where each man was ultimate judge and director of his own conduct, they could not exist, any more than concord could.

"When the Natural Right of each man had been transferred to an organised community, then there was, for the first time, revealed to men what justice and injustice, right and wrong conduct were." "In the state of Nature there is nothing which is good or bad by general consent. Since every man who is in the state of Nature looks only to his own advantage, and decides according to his own judgment what is good or bad. And there is no law which binds him to obey any one but himself." "Thus, in the state of Nature transgression (*peccatum*) cannot be conceived as possible; it can be found only in the *status civilis*, where what is good or bad is decreed by general consent" (Part 4, Prop. 37, Cor. II.). "In the *status civilis*, where common law decrees what is good and what is bad, cunning is rightly distinguished into good and bad. But in the state of Nature, where each man is the judge of his own conduct, and has the highest right to make and interpret laws for himself, and also to repeal them when he judges that the better course, we cannot, under such conditions, conceive of any man acting deceitfully" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Note 30).

And the same is true of Justice, Injustice, Obedience, Crime, Injury, etc. All these notions can have meaning and validity only within a settled community, where there is a system of rights and duties. For in this way alone does a man gain a civil right to anything, even to his own property or life. All that he has is his in and through the law and social order which guarantee him secure and peaceful enjoyment of them. But to claim anything as against, or in spite of, this social order is suicidal. For

"in the state of Nature no one is, by common consent, the owner of anything, nor is there anything in Nature which can be said to be the property of this man and not of that. All things are here the property of any man. Accordingly, in the state of Nature we cannot conceive of any 'will to give every man his own,' nor any will to take away from any one what belongs to him. That is to say, in the *status naturalis* there is nothing which can be called just or unjust. These terms are applicable only within the *status civilis*, in which it is settled by common consent what shall belong to this man and to that" (Part 4, Prop. 37, Schol. II.). "Transgression (*peccatum*), then, is nothing but disobedience; and thus it is punishable solely by the law of the State. And, on the other hand, obedience is counted meritorious in a citizen, as he is thereby judged

worthy to enjoy the privileges of the State" (*Ibid.*). "Wrong-doing (*peccatum*) cannot be conceived except in a State. . . . For that is an offence (*peccatum*) which may not be lawfully done, or which is forbidden by law. And obedience is the steadfast willingness to do that which by law is good, and which, according to the decree of the community, ought to be done" (*Tract. Pol.*, 2, 19). "As wrong-doing and obedience, in the strict use of these terms, cannot be conceived save in a State, so neither can Justice and Injustice. For there is nothing in Nature which could be said to be by law, or by right, the property of one man and not of another. But everything belongs to those who have the power to make good their claim to it. It is only in a State where it is settled by a general body of law what belongs to this man and what to that, that the term 'just' can be applied. That is to say, a man is called just, who, in a State, gives evidence of a steadfast willingness to give every man his own, and he unjust who tries to take what belongs to another" (*Tract. Pol.*, 2, 23). "It is by civil law alone that children are the heirs of their parents, and not in virtue of any Natural Right. For it is only the power of the State which makes each man master of certain property. Hence the same power, or right, which makes the will of each man in dealing with his property effectual during his life, also gives effect to his will after his death, so long as the State continues in existence. It is for this reason that any one in the *status civilis* enjoys, after his death, the same right as he had while alive. For, as we have just said, it is not so much in virtue of his own power, as through the power of the State, which is undying, that he can dispose of his property in any way" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 25). "Justice is the steadfastness of spirit which gives to every one what, by the law of the State, belongs to him; and injustice is taking away from any one, under the guise of law, what, on a true interpretation of the laws, belongs to him. These are also known as Equity and Partiality (*Iniquitas*), because those who are appointed to settle disputes are bound to show no respect of persons, but to treat all in the same way, and defend the rights of all alike, neither jealous of the rich nor contemptuous of the poor" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). "As we have just shown, justice depends solely on the decree of the sovereign power, and so, no one can be just unless he directs his life in accordance with their recognised decrees" (*Ibid.*, Ch. 20).

That is to say, Spinoza contends that this whole set of terms, Justice, Injustice, Transgression, Obedience, Equity, Iniquity, Crime, Duty, Obligation, Punishment, and even Law itself, originates in, and, in the strict sense, holds good only within, a civil community. Whatever other meanings these terms have acquired are derivative and analogical, and therefore more or less inexact. For example, the term

obedience (*obsequium*), which properly means "the steadfast will to do what, according to the decree of the community, ought to be done," is also applied to the religious man's love and service of God ; but, when so applied, it is very misleading. For it tends to make that which constitutes man's perfect freedom and blessedness appear to be a yoke imposed upon him. Similarly we use the term wrong-doing, or transgression (*peccatum*), not only to characterise an offence against the laws of the State, but also to describe any action which is contrary to right Reason ; and, in this latter sense, we speak of a man sinning against himself. This use of the term, Spinoza admits, is not so very improper, since the laws of the best state must follow the dictate of Reason. But another use of the term is more objectionable, namely that in which it is applied to Nature and her regular order. Men have taken the term law, which is always relative to a civil order, and extended it to express the general rules and course of Nature, as when they speak of the 'laws of Nature.' This is why they talk of Nature *obeying* the laws imposed upon her, of objects observing, following, being subject to, or under the reign of law. All of these expressions are, in a strict sense, inaccurate, as they involve that what exists, and happens, is something different from the law or rule according to which it does exist and happen. They are expressions borrowed from a quite different sphere of existence, namely the sphere of civil relations, and applied directly where such relations have no meaning. An object cannot *obey* a law, since no disobedience is possible to it. An event cannot be *ruled* by law, as the law by which it comes into and passes out of existence is just the nature of the thing itself.

Of course in modern times the phrase 'laws of Nature' is not, as it was in Spinoza's day, simply a tentative analogical extension of the phrase 'laws of the State.' It has won for itself an independent position, and no longer recognises its ancestry. But even now its 'speech bewrayeth' it, and many of its early associations still cling stubbornly to it. One misleading association against which Spinoza protests has not yet quite lost its influence, namely the idea that Nature

sometimes violates her own laws, or sometimes acts contra to Reason : or, to put it otherwise, that a law of Nature c be abrogated, or suspended, or superseded, in the same w as a civil law can. Whoever understood the real natu of a law of existence could not even conceive this possible.

CHAPTER XXIII.

VALUE OF A GOOD CONSTITUTION.

"THE State whose safety depends on the fidelity of any individual, and whose affairs cannot be rightly conducted unless those who have the administration of them are willing to do their duty with loyalty, can have very little stability. If it is to enjoy any permanence, the administration of its public affairs must be arranged in such a way, that those who have charge of them, whether they are governed by Reason or by emotion, will have no inducement to be false to their trust, or to act amiss. So far as the security of the State is concerned, it matters little what motive it is which leads men to conduct its affairs properly. What really matters is that there shall be efficiency of administration. For while the *virtus* of an individual man is freedom of spirit (*animi libertas*) or *fortitudo*, the *virtus* of a State is security" (*Tract. Pol.*, I. 6).

The principle expressed in this passage appears at first sight inconsistent with what Spinoza has already said. For we have already seen that the end for which the State exists is to give to the dictates of Reason, or the principles of the moral life, that supremacy in the thought and conduct of its citizens which these principles ought to have. The ideal of the State is to constitute itself such a Kingdom of Justice and Love that all its members shall find their highest welfare in it. But in the passage before us this high end seems to be lost sight of, or at least depreciated. The excellence of the State is no longer treated as a moral excellence, and the *virtus* of the community as a whole is

sharply distinguished from the *virtus* of each man within it. Is there not an inconsistency of thought here?

The reply to this is, that Spinoza regards these two ideas as essential parts of one whole, and distinguishes them in this way that he may show how intimately they depend on one another. His point is, the State is not an individual human being, therefore it cannot have the virtues or excellences of one. For the excellence of a thing is determined by the nature of the thing. The excellence of a man consists in a clear-sighted and steadfast devotion to the promotion of goodness in himself and in others. But, while the State is called into existence to further this end, it is only a means, though a necessary means, thereto. It is not itself a moral person. It is not subject to moral responsibilities. It can do its citizens no wrong. It cannot break faith with another State. And it is not bound to conduct its affairs in accordance with the same moral rules as are binding on a private citizen.

Some of these points will be dealt with in the next two chapters, where we shall treat of the relation of the State to other States and to its own citizens. What concerns us here is the peculiar nature of the State, or its distinctive excellence. This will determine what the State can and cannot do, and also the laws to which it must have regard if it would continue to exist.

The *virtus* or excellence of a State, then, is security, stability, permanence. /The State was called into existence to guarantee each man against the dangers incident to his own and other men's ignorance, weakness, inconstancy, and passion; and to give to the lives and purposes of each and all a unity, momentum, breadth, and continuity which they could not otherwise have had. Whatever best enables it to do this, is the only law the State ought to recognise, for this is the end of its being./

We have already seen that the power of a State consists in having "as it were, one mind," and also that this "one mind" does not mean one man, but one organised judgment, or body of opinion. We are now prepared to recognise that this unity of mind, or common will, is to be found chiefly in

the system of law whose nature and function we sketched in the last chapter. This embodies those mutual relations between the citizens and their rulers, and between the citizens themselves, which alone can constitute for all a harmonious and happy existence. Spinoza regards this system of law as the highest and most enduring expression of a nation's life, the thing which cannot be torn away without bringing everything to chaos. For this is deeper than any other form of corporate unity, more intimately bound up with men's feelings, thoughts, and aspirations than any other product of their common life. Hence, even royal authority must bow before this sense of national unity which is embodied in a general body of laws and customs. And the King who would attempt to run counter to these is simply seeking to destroy his kingdom and with it his kingship. For what holds men together is not the existence of a head, or monarch, but the "one soul" which has found a realisation for itself in a common recognised order of life maintained by national laws and customs. And the authority of the head lasts only so long as he does not seek to destroy the one life and soul which animates the nation, but to strengthen and foster it. If he act otherwise, he ceases to be the head, for the body ceases to have that common life which is the very condition of his own power and efficiency.

Hence Spinoza maintains that while particular enactments are easily made and repealed, there is a general form, or constitution, which, because it has grown out of each nation's own circumstances and conditions, is practically unchangeable. The form of a nation's government is not an artificial creation, or a haphazard choice, but the conscious and deliberate unfolding of its own conception of life, the spiritual framework which is the condition of its own endeavour. And neither the King, nor the people themselves, can alter this at their pleasure. Even if a certain form of political constitution be abstractly better or higher, it does not follow that it would be better for any particular nation to adopt it in place of its own. On the contrary, Spinoza believes that such an exchange would generally lead to nothing but social discord and civil war, and an eventual return to the constitution which

had been discarded. A nation's constitution fits it as no other political ordering of its life would, just because it is the creation of its own thought, desire, and aspiration, and embodies the kind of happiness which it has so far learned to prize. To give it the constitution which another nation has evolved is not to give it the power and the will which are the soul of every constitution.

Thus the body of law under which a nation has learned to live is the soul or life, which keeps it a united whole. And public opinion or national custom is also part of this settled order, for "not only will men hardly endure what is unjust and unfair; neither will they endure what is counted disgraceful, or that any one should despise the recognised customs of the State." This does not involve, of course, that all laws within a State are alike integral, and inseparable, parts of its common thought and will. On the contrary, Spinoza holds that many laws, or particular enactments, can and should be repealed when the circumstances which gave rise to them have changed. But he maintains none the less that what we call the 'constitutional law' of a State cannot be greatly changed without the destruction of the national unity. These constitutional provisions Spinoza calls by various names, *fundamenta imperii*, *jura fundamentalia*, *forma imperii*, *facies imperii*, *primaria lex*, and so on. This settled and established constitution is the security for a nation's peace and liberties. It is not a grant or enactment made by a monarch or ruling power, but the condition on which men recognise the right and authority of any ruler. Hence, it vitally concerns a people's happiness that such fundamental principles be so fixed and settled that no ruler will dare, or will try, to violate them. If they are so fixed, it will be well for the ruler as well as for the people. He will simply say to himself, if I attempt to overthrow these, I shall no more be King, for no one will obey me; hence my energy and love of power must find more profitable exercise in some other direction. And the damming up of this channel will perforce turn his activities into a better.

If on the other hand you leave the fundamental, or constitutional, laws of the State within the uncontrolled discretion

of the ruler, you thereby not only infallibly destroy the liberty of the subjects and the prosperity of the State ; but you also do the worst possible thing for the ruler himself, because you tempt him to suppose that whatever he wills has the force and efficacy of law, and by leading him to 'believe a lie' you make him rush upon his own doom. A good constitution deeply planted in the affections and the interests of the people is at once the secret of the State's eternity, the happiness and freedom of the subjects, and the best security for the King's own power and permanence. These are the main ideas which govern Spinoza's treatment of political constitutions, and the detailed study of them will make them still more significant.

The first point to be noted is, that "nations are distinguished from one another solely in respect of the type of society and of the peculiar laws under which they live and are governed" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 3). In each State "regulations of conduct adapted to the nature of the place, and the genius of the people, are to be devised ; for the thing which has to be mainly kept in view is that the subjects be led to do their duty with good-will and not under the compulsion of law" (*Tract. Pol.*, 10, 7). This is why Spinoza regards it as a sure symptom of weakness and degeneracy in a community when the people, and especially the upper classes, begin to be ashamed of their own ancestry and national customs, and to ape those of another nation. For such servile imitation is a sign that the unity and strength which alone enable a State to maintain for itself a distinctive place in the world, are fast disappearing. If the peculiar laws and customs which constitute the genius, or soul, of its existence once begin to be despised, the outward semblance of life and individuality will not long continue. For if law and custom no longer hold the society together from within, the whole world will combine to dismember it from without. It is safe from outward assault only while it is the life-blood and inspiration of its citizens' existence.

Spinoza works out this idea when he shows that the political organisation of each community (*forma imperii*) is so indigenous to that community, so much the peculiar

product of its own circumstances and history, that it cannot be destroyed, or even greatly changed, without the dissolution of the State itself. It is on this ground that he takes exception to all Utopias or ideal States. They have not passed through the 'fiery trial' of practical life. They do not embody a people's thought, will, and aspiration. They are always abstract, and take little account of what really makes a nation's political constitution 'fit' it so well. They assume that there is one type of excellence to which all constitutions should conform.

But this is the very opposite of the truth. A nation's political constitution is not a rule of conduct which it can adopt and discard as it pleases. It is the product of its own life and conditions. It embodies the insight of its wisest men; and it has moulded the people's habits of thought, feeling, and action into conformity with itself. Hence to cut it away is to cut away the root which gives unity and strength to all the parts. And to exchange it for another is to attempt to improve the plant by giving it the root of another plant. A good constitution is always an integral part of the nation's endeavour, for its goodness must (in accordance with principles we have already discussed) consist simply in the place which it has secured in the hearts of its citizens. In this case no less than in the case of moral good, goodness is relative to the particular for which it is good. A constitution is not a good one for a people, unless they are already prepared to understand and appreciate the kind of life which it seeks to maintain. While it may be a good one for it, although it is, as compared with the constitutions of other nations, very simple and undeveloped.

Thus any great or sudden change in these fundamental or constitutional provisions is to be deprecated alike in the interest of the ruler and in that of his subjects, since nothing is more fatal to that mutual confidence which is the essence of all efficient government than insecurity and instability in these constitutive ideas.

"It is a necessity that the constitution of each State be maintained, as it cannot be changed without incurring the risk of the State's total destruction" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 18). "We see how fatal a mistake it is for

a people unaccustomed to the rule of a Monarch, and with laws already established, to proceed to elect a King. For the burden of rule under these conditions will be too heavy for any King. Royal authority will not tamely endure that the nation's laws and enactments be instituted by some one of less authority. Much less can the Monarch be expected to show any zeal in maintaining such laws, especially as, in the enactment of them, the King had no place at all, but only the people or a Council which was then the ruling power. Under these conditions, a King who has to defend the ancient laws of a people would seem to be rather their slave than their master. And a Monarch just raised to power will try most zealously to get fresh laws made, and to refashion to his own advantage the laws of the State that already exist, and to so weaken the people that they will not find it so easy to take away the royal dignity as they did to confer it" (*Ibid.*). Similarly in the *Tract. Pol.*, in the sketch of a Monarchical State, Spinoza points out that he is speaking only of such a State as is established by a free people, and that a free nation alone will be able to make use of his ideas; "for a people accustomed to another form of State will not be able, without grave risk of overthrowing the whole civil order, to take away its recognised foundations and to change the structure of the whole State" (7, 26). And, in order to enforce the same idea, a contrast is drawn in the *Theol.-Pol.* between the condition of the Hebrews before, and after, they changed the theocracy into a Kingdom. For so long as the government was a popular one, there was only one civil war, and this was brought entirely to an end, nay, not only ended, but ended with such feelings of compassion in the hearts of the victors that they straightway set themselves to restore their ruined enemies and brethren to all their old dignity and power. But after "the people, quite unaccustomed to Kings, changed the first form of the State into a monarchical one," civil war was forever being waged, and waged with such ruthless ferocity as almost surpasses belief, until at length the utter prostration of the people made them fall an easy prey to their enemies.

The point of the argument here is not that democratic government is necessarily a better form of government than a Monarchy, but that a people which has grown up under, and become wedded to, one form of rule cannot, without risking the greatest calamities, make a new political departure. Spinoza is well aware that even the earlier form of rule under which the Hebrews enjoyed the greatest measure of peace and happiness is neither desirable nor possible for any modern nation. That is to say, it is not God's will or law for it, though it was his will and law for the Hebrews.

"No one can now imitate the political constitution of the Hebrew State, nor would it be desirable that it should be possible. For if any other people wished to transfer their rights to God, they would have to form an express covenant with God, as the Hebrews did. But this requires not only the will of those who transfer their rights, but also the will of God to whom these rights would have to be transferred. But God has made known through the Apostles that his covenant is no longer written in ink, nor on tables of stone, but by his spirit on men's hearts. Moreover, such a form of political constitution as the Hebrews enjoyed could perhaps be of service only to those who could live for themselves alone, without having any intercourse with the outer world, and could shut themselves up within their own frontiers and keep separate from all the rest of the world. But those for whom intercourse with other nations is a necessity would find such a constitution very little suited to them. Thus there are very few nations to which it would be serviceable" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 18).

But, while it is not God's will that every State should have the same form or fundamental constitution, it is his will that every State should have one definite form, one definite organisation of its life and industry. We can discern that this is his will, and that his will is never ineffectual, because the peace, prosperity, and independence of the State necessarily follow when this condition is realised; while calamity, weakness, and war are no less inevitable in the absence of this condition. Now every State aspires to be strong, stable, and permanent. It seeks to embody that eternity which the individual life cannot, to maintain a continuity of purpose and endeavour which the shortness and uncertainty of each man's existence entirely precludes, and to gather up and utilise the separate achievements of individual genius and skill that would otherwise be but episodic in their appearance and their disappearance.

What, then, makes a state eternal? Is it the compact which men have made with one another and with their ruler or rulers, agreeing to transfer forever the right of acting according to their own individual judgments, and to be obedient to the common judgment or to the judgment of a sovereign? Spinoza's reply is that this has nothing to do with the eternity of the State. Even if men do swear an eternal covenant, this will not make them live one day longer under common laws than if they form no such agreement. Men in the same way often swear eternal

friendship, but the friendship always comes automatically to an end when the common objects of desire and interest from which it sprang are no longer present ; and no appeal to plighted troth can do anything to make the withered flowers bloom again. For the eternity of a thing depends on the nature of the thing, not on whether we would like always to have or enjoy it. This is one of Spinoza's ruling thoughts, and he finds one application of it in the sphere of political relations. For the eternity of the State does not, and cannot, depend—as Hobbes held it did—on an original eternal covenant. This is, on the contrary, the false eternity which has no security for its own continuance. To find the true eternity we must discover what there is in the nature of the State itself, and in the mutual relations of its parts to one another, which makes continuance in being not an accident of its life, but a necessity. If the social covenant is to last forever it must be by constituting and maintaining a certain definite organisation, and correlation of functions, which are integral and essential elements in the life and endeavour of each man. This correlation is the only covenant that will, or can, last.

What Spinoza then seeks to show is, that a rightly constituted and well organised State is *ipso facto* eternal, or at least permanent, secure, and stable ; while a badly organised one is no less necessarily doomed to early extinction. " If any State can have an eternal existence, it will necessarily be the one whose laws, once rightly instituted, are kept inviolate." But a rightly instituted body of laws is more easy to speak of than to realise. It is not enough that the laws have a certain theoretical unity, and embody a legislator's conception of what is wise and good. A body of law is a much more complex product than this would express, and its real efficiency depends on many other elements. The points on which Spinoza lays most stress are these. In the first place, a political constitution must have a certain unity, or character, which distinguishes it, and gives it its own peculiar cast or type. In the second place, it must be a unity that lives in its parts, and involves, for its proper working, certain distinctive parts.

In the third place, it must have a deeper and firmer basis in the national life than the will or decree of any one man, or of any Council of men, can afford. And lastly, it must be the bulwark and the strength alike of the people's liberties and of the King's authority, and constitute in this way the indissoluble bond that makes them one in weal and in woe, one in hope and in interest. These points we shall consider shortly in their order.

In the first place then, the political order, or fundamental constitution, of each nation must have a definite individuality. This is from one point of view a limit upon the national freedom; but from a truer point of view, this limit is just the very nature of the nation's freedom. For the luxury of having a new constitution every year is one which only the nations which have no past and no future can afford. The people who are free to try any new experiment in government are incapable of learning anything from any of them. Strength and purpose are inseparable from resoluteness of character and definiteness of aim. Freedom to be and to do anything is in a nation, as in a man, impotence and not power or true liberty.

Thus the 'form' or 'aspect' of the State must be kept one and the same, for this is just another name for the continuity of life which gives the State the place and power it enjoys in the world. Each community must not be ashamed to recognise the general system of political order which constitutes its strength and its unity. To make these "absolutely fundamental laws" eternal, by surrounding them with every possible safeguard, is one of the aims which Spinoza keeps most in view in his sketches of Monarchical and Aristocratic States in the later part of the *Tract. Pol.*

(2) But the safeguard on which he most relies, is that which is furnished by the organised character, or concrete energies, of such a constitution. A political constitution maintains and defends itself in the best way when it realises itself in difference and variety of parts and functions. For every State must have a certain correlation, or proportion, of elements within it. Its fundamental laws have a certain *cohaerentia* and the State a certain *analogia* (see *Tract. Pol.*,

7, 26). And it is this essential inter-connection of parts which is the best guarantee for the State's permanence. If any of the parts be lacking, or if any lapse into inefficiency, or if there be any element present which has no real power or office in the whole, the State will in each case be in a poor condition of health.

As an illustration of this principle Spinoza quotes the case of the Netherlands (see *Tract. Pol.*, 9, 14). The Dutch people thought that their political freedom would be forever secured if only they got rid of their Count, and abolished the authority which was vested in the head of the State.

"They did not think of re-organising it, but left all its members as they had been previously constituted. Thus the County of Holland continued to exist without a Count, like a man's body without the head, and the State itself lasted on without a name. Hence it need occasion no surprise that the majority of the subjects did not know in whom the supreme power of the State was vested. And even if this had been otherwise, those who were the real rulers of the State were far too few in number really to rule the people and hold powerful rivals in check. Hence the latter were often able to plot against the rulers with impunity, and at last to bring about their downfall. Thus the sudden overthrow of the Republic was not due to the fact that time was fruitlessly spent in deliberation. It was the result of the mutilated condition of the State and the fewness of its rulers."

That is to say, if a people finds its affairs going badly, it naturally turns its anger on its ruler, and determines to curb his power, or to remove him altogether. But if it merely does this, it effects nothing. For the body politic is in each case one whole. And just as you do not improve the body by taking away the head, even if it is the head which is diseased, so you do not strengthen the political life of the nation by taking away an essential organ of its activity. If a nation has not been accustomed to a king, and to the institutions and forms of life and type of law which monarchy involves, the case is different. It can do without kingship, because it is organised on a quite different plan, which renders such an office superfluous. But if it has been accustomed to have a reigning monarch, all its institutions, its type of society, and the forms in which authority expresses itself, have been adapted thereto; and hence, by weakening

or abolishing the royal authority, and not at the same time reorganising the whole order of social and political existence, you simply disfigure and weaken the whole body of the State without accomplishing any real reform. For men who have been wont to look upon a king as the source of all law, the sanction of all authority, and the fountain of all honour, will not regard any one of lower rank with the same veneration and respect. Even their own leader is to them 'one of themselves'; and anyone who seeks to arrogate to himself the supreme power will be made to feel himself a usurper. If a people's thoughts, wishes, ambitions, affections have become twined around a line of kings, no power on earth will change them, or make a real revolution or change of political organisation permanently successful.

It is in this way that Spinoza explains the futility of the attempts that have been made to prevent tyranny by putting tyrants to death. Such a device history itself shows to have been quite useless, nay not only useless, but inevitably productive of a still more oppressive slavery. Nor is the reason of this far to seek. Putting a tyrant to death does not change the causes or conditions which lead him and others to act tyrannically. What these causes are we shall see directly; but that there must be some cause is self-evident. For no man in his senses would take the risk of ruling in this way, and the risk of his own violent death which such rule always involves, if it were equally open to him to exercise his sovereignty in a wiser and more secure way. Now if there are such causes the removal of one tyrant simply produces another, and if one has been put to death his successor will necessarily stand in fear of those who accomplished this deed, and will try to put the perpetrators of it to death that he may have nothing to fear from them.

Spinoza's argument, that is to say, is that tyranny is one of the worst evils that can befall a community; but that if it is to be got rid of, you must first find out, and remove, the cause of it. And the cause of it is not a bad, or perverse, will in the ruler, but 'something rotten in the state of Denmark.' The tyranny of the ruler is but a *symptom* of

the real disease, a sign of want of tone in the system as a whole. If you attack the symptom, and try to remove it without going deeper, you simply aggravate the disease, and make the appearance of still graver symptoms inevitable. Nothing will really deliver a nation from a tyrant, except that which delivers them from the causes that lead their ruler to be a tyrant. And these causes are to be found in the bad constitution of the State itself, not in the inborn cruelty, arrogance, and unbridled passions of the sovereign.

"I cannot omit to notice that it is no less dangerous for a people accustomed to the rule of a Monarch to get rid of him, even if it be clearly proved that he is a tyrant. For the people have grown accustomed to royal authority ; they are controlled by it alone, and despise and make light of any one of lesser dignity. Hence, if the nation remove one man, it will find it necessary, as the Prophets formerly did, to elect another in his place. And the man thus elected will have to be a tyrant whether he wishes to be so or not. For with what eyes will he can look on the hands of citizens red with royal blood? And what will be his feelings when he hears them boasting of the parricide as if it were a glorious deed? For was not this deed committed just as a warning to himself? Hence if he wishes to be a real King, and not to have his conduct reviewed by the people as if they were the master and the King their servant, and if he cannot reconcile himself to reign precariously, then he will have to set himself to avenge the death of his predecessor, and, for the sake of his own safety, he will make an example of those who had a hand in this deed, that the people may not dare to repeat such a crime. But he will not readily be able to avenge the death of his predecessor by executing the citizens, unless he at the same time adopts his predecessor's cause, approves his deeds, and follows in his footsteps."

"This explains why a people, though it has often succeeded in changing its tyrant, has never succeeded in dispensing with one altogether, or changing a monarchical State into one of another type.

"Of this the English people have recently afforded a fatal instance. They sought for grounds by which they might, under the guise of law, put their king to death. But, when he was out of the way, they found themselves quite unable to change the form of their political constitution. After much bloodshed they simply succeeded in getting a new king who was known by a different title—as if the whole dispute had been about a name. And even he found that he could not enjoy any security except by destroying entirely the royal stock, putting to death the king's friends or those suspected of being so, and by distracting the repose of peace with continual wars and rumours of wars, so that the people, having always something new to occupy their attention, might have their thoughts diverted

from the execution of their king. Thus at last the people saw that all they had done for the welfare of their country was to violate the rights of their lawful king, and to alter everything for the worse. And they decided to retrace their steps as far as they could, nor were they satisfied until all things were restored to their former condition.¹

"Some one will perhaps bring forward as a difficulty the case of the Roman people. Surely they found it an easy matter to remove a tyrant. But it seems to me that even this instance entirely confirms my view. One might think indeed that it would be very easy for the Roman people to rid themselves of a tyrant, and to change the form of their government, seeing that the right of electing the King and his successor was in the hands of the people themselves, and that the people—consisting as they did of turbulent and unruly men—were not yet really accustomed to yield obedience to their Kings, three of the six whom they had had having been put to death. Yet even the Romans only succeeded in substituting a number of tyrants for one. And these kept them so miserably afflicted by foreign and by civil war, that at last the people again had recourse to Monarchy, the title only being changed as in England" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 18).

This is one of the principles which Spinoza gained from his study of Machiavelli. For "one of Machiavelli's aims seems to have been to show how foolishly the crowd acts in trying to rid themselves of a tyrant. For the causes which make the Prince a tyrant cannot in this way be at all removed. On the contrary they are the more increased, the more reason the Prince has to fear the same fate. And such ground for fear is given when a people has already made an example of its Prince, and boasts of the parricide as of a high exploit" (*Tract. Pol.*, 5, 7). That is to say, a State is a unity of co-operating and inter-dependent parts. If one part does its work badly, this is a proof, not that it is the real offender and should be amputated, but that something is wrong with the state of the whole body, and therefore with each and every part. The cure is to give the whole body more vitality, to re-adjust the relations of its parts, to give it a different occupation, to secure greater unity of action. You must physic the body politic as a whole if any member is too arrogant and obtrusive. Simply

¹ Spinoza saw the Restoration of 1660; he did not live to see the Revolution of 1688. But I question whether that event would have led him to modify the principles he here expounds.

to rush for the surgeon's knife to get the aggressive member removed is the act of folly, not of wisdom. For every member removed is a mutilation of the whole, a loss of real power and efficiency. And the body which has thus been mutilated will suffer from chronic illness until it has grown another organ to take the place of the one lost. Each member will keep in its proper place and do, to the general advantage, its appointed work, if the body as a whole is well constituted, well fed, and well occupied.

Thus tyranny is not to be cured by destroying the tyrant, nor even by restricting his powers. An enlargement of his powers might in some cases be the desideratum ; that is to say, to give the tyrant other objects of hope, interest, and ambition, and to readjust his relations to the other parts of the State, might turn from pernicious and dangerous employment to beneficent and profitable exercise, those energies that will find some means of expressing themselves. But whatever be the cure that is required in any particular case, the point which has always to be borne in mind is that a ruler's unconstitutional conduct is, like the unconstitutional conduct of a palpitating heart, symptomatic of some general derangement or weakness, and that the symptom can only be removed by finding and removing the cause which gives rise to it.

The third point on which Spinoza lays stress is, that it is in the interest of efficient and good government, and therefore in the interest of the ruler no less than in that of his subjects, that the constitution or fundamental laws of the State be so deeply and firmly planted that they do not depend simply upon the will of the King or the supreme Council. If this is the case, the people will enjoy the greatest real liberty, and the ruler will exercise the most ample authority. For no State is so well constituted, so stable and so secure, as that in which institutions, forms of life, principles of law and of government, have worked themselves into the very fibre of a nation's life and endeavour. While none is so ill-constituted, as that in which these fundamental forms of common thought and will are at the mercy of a ruler's inconstancy and passions, or even at the

mercy of a Council's momentary weakness, incapacity, or panic. A State can enjoy true security, only when its deepest relations are the immanent bond which holds all its parts together, and are regarded by ruler and subject alike as the essential condition of all authority and obedience. Thus these constitutional principles should have a sacredness and majesty which belongs to nothing else.¹ They should be established beyond reach of violation. They should be safeguarded by the most careful and elaborate system of check and counter-check which can be devised. It should be made the sole and entire interest of a definite body of men to see that they are in no way infringed ; and any one who denies them or seeks to subvert their authority, thereby puts himself outside of the law's protection.

There ought, therefore, to be in every well-governed State fundamental laws or principles of government, which the King is not free to change, even if he is so inclined. Nay, these should always be treated by the citizens as his real will, even when he gives orders that are at variance with them ; and his real will should be regarded rather than a momentary wish which would occasion his own downfall and the State's as well.

" It should be noted that there is nothing at all at variance with ordinary practice, in the endeavour to establish laws so firmly that even the King himself cannot annul them. The Kings of the Persians, for example, even though they were commonly worshipped as divine, yet had not the power to repeal laws once enacted, as is evident from Daniel, Ch. 5 [Ch. 6, 15]. And in no case with which I am acquainted is the Monarch elected unconditionally and without any stipulations. Moreover, such a condition of sovereignty is not at variance either with Reason or with that absolute obedience which is due to the King. For the foundations of the State should be regarded as the King's eternal decrees ; nor can his ministers be said to refuse him that entire obedience which is his due, when they refuse to carry out an order which is subversive of the foundations of the

¹ In these and other respects Spinoza anticipates in a rather remarkable way leading principles of the American constitution.

State. The case of Ulysses may make this clearer. His comrades obeyed his orders when, knowing him to be bewitched by the singing of the Sirens, they refused to loose him from the bonds with which he was tied to the mast of the ship, even though he ordered them to do so, and hurled at them every kind of threat. And it is counted a proof of Ulysses' wisdom that he afterwards expressed to his comrades his gratitude that they had regard to his first command. In a similar way, Kings also are wont to give instructions to their judges, telling them to administer justice, and be no respecters of persons, not even regarding the King himself if he do, in any case, give a command which they know to be contrary to the established law. For Kings are not gods but men, and men who are often bewitched by the singing of the Sirens. Thus, if all things were made dependent on the unstable will of one man, nothing would be fixed. And so, if a monarchical State is to have any stability, it must be constituted in such a way that all things shall be done in accordance with the King's decree ; that is to say, in such a way that all law and right (*jus*) shall be the deliberate or express will (*explicata voluntas*) of the King, but not in such a way that every wish of the King shall be law (*jus*)" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 1).

The same principle holds good even where, as in an Aristocratic State, a Council, and not a single man, exercises sovereign power.

"In an aristocratic State all the absolutely fundamental laws should be eternal. And with a view to this end it shall be ordained that if any man in the supreme Council shall call in question any fundamental principle of the constitution, such as that which forbids the extension of the term of office for the head of the army, or that which is designed to prevent any lessening of the number of the Patricians, and the like, he shall be held to be guilty of high treason, and shall not only be condemned to death, and have his goods confiscated, but there shall also be set up in public some memorial of his punishment to keep his crime in everlasting remembrance" (*Tract. Pol.*, 8, 25). In the aristocratic State which Spinoza sketches it is the one duty of the Syndics to see that the fundamental laws of the constitution are preserved inviolate, and they are to enjoy precedence in the supreme Council of State. "But, before they take their seats, they must swear by the safety of this supreme Council and by the public liberty that they will use their utmost diligence

to see that the national laws are kept inviolate, and that the common good is sought" (*Ibid.*, 26).

The reason for constituting every State, however different the form of its government, in this way is, that these are the essential conditions which constitute the relation of ruler and subject, making the ruler able to command and the subject willing to obey. If they are taken away, the tie which binds ruler and subject is thereby destroyed. The King is no more a king, the supreme Council no more has authority; and the subjects have ceased to owe any allegiance to either of them. Thus the real will of the King or the Council must be assumed to stop at the willing of whatever would be destructive of their own sovereignty. A King does not will to have no subjects, and to be able to command and secure no obedience. He does not will to become no king. A Council does not will to do that which will destroy its own supreme authority. In each case the sovereign wills first and last, and above all and through all, what will enable him to remain a sovereign. Hence if he order or enact anything which would dissolve those bonds of "fear and reverence" that bind his subjects to him, and to one another, this is not his 'express' or 'deliberate' will. For in this case he is trying to commit political suicide. That therefore, is the best form of political order which brings home to the ruler with most directness and force how impotent he becomes, if he think that he has only to will a thing in order to give it the force of law.

In this matter there are only two alternatives. The fundamental laws of a nation, or the principles of its political order, may be well understood, and embodied in a definite constitution; or, they may be left undefined and undetermined by any formal or written constitution. The former is the method which Spinoza prefers. And he does so, because it helps to make both rulers and subjects more sensitive to the nature and end of all authority. It keeps ever before the sovereign's eyes the fact that his power is absolute, only so long as he observes the conditions which make him and keep him sovereign; and that, if he attempt to override these, he is thereby dethroning himself. The other alterna-

tive leaves the sovereign to find this out for himself, and often by experiences for which both he and the State have to pay dear. It does not warn him of the folly of a course which is leading him to ruin ; it does not afford the rest of the State any constitutional means of arresting his foolish action ; and it allows a storm of indignation to gather until there is no 'place left him for repentance,' when he might, under other conditions, have been made to understand timeously the end to which these things would lead.

Constitutional principles which have attained a written, or at least a well recognised and well defined form, Spinoza regards as one of the State's chief bulwarks of safety. They warn both king and people of the way of danger, and keep ever in view those eternally effective and inviolable laws which make all rule and all obedience even possible. And, in this way, they are able to avert distrust, misrule, foolish policy, and high-handed aggression which would otherwise have been the ruin of both king and people.

Of course it may be, that the written or generally-recognised constitution of a nation is only what we call a paper one. That is to say, the principles and fundamental laws which profess to express, and embody, the real relations that bind the ruler and his subjects in that State into an indissoluble unity, may not be the real bonds of union between them at all, but only what some men have thought, or wished, should be the relations. In such a case, the real principles of the State's unity are not those which have the sanction of public enactment, while those which have this sanction have no real force of law in the lives of the citizens. The great danger of such a situation is, that conditions and stipulations of such an artificial kind are not, and cannot be, kept, because they have none of that real sanction and security which comes from their being essential elements in the very relation of sovereign and subject. For if they are not of such an immanent nature, the ruler finds nothing in the observing of them which gives him greater authority and control, but much which unjustifiably lessens his authority, and makes him eager to get free from their yoke. And by discovering that he can violate with impunity, and

even with advantage to his sovereignty, the stipulations and conditions thus imposed upon him, he naturally concludes that everything is possible to him, that *no* conditions are binding on him, that he may do what he will, and as he will, and yet retain supreme authority. And the falsity of this conclusion is proved only by the catastrophe to which it leads. Hence conditions and stipulations which have not already an integral place in the common life and will and endeavour of the nation as a whole, are worse than useless when imposed upon the sovereign ruler. They lessen the dignity and power of his office in a way which nothing in the nature and functions of that office requires. And, by imposing restraint and limit where no restraint or limit should be, and where none can be made effective, they make a ruler regard all conditions as equally futile, and any line of action as permissible for him. Thus they make the man who might otherwise have been a good ruler into a tyrant; and beget for the people who trusted to such empty and unsubstantial stipulations, and to the empty promises which alone were possible regarding such unreal principles, a load of affliction and calamity much greater than they would have had to endure, had they imposed no preliminary conditions of sovereignty at all. This is Spinoza's meaning when he says :

"In laying down the foundations of a State it is necessary to give the utmost heed to human emotions. Nor is it sufficient to show what ought to be done. What is needful, first of all, is to show how it can be secured that men shall respect the law and maintain it, whether they are led by emotion or by Reason. For if the constitutional laws (*jura*) of the State, or the public liberty, has nothing to rely on but the weak support of legal enactment (*leges*), not only will there be no security for the citizens enjoying such liberty, but such a liberty will even tend to their destruction. For it cannot be doubted that no State is in a more wretched condition than the best State is, when it begins to totter to its fall, unless its downfall and the loss of its independence come at one blow—a fatality which is hardly conceivable. Thus, it would be much more satisfactory for the subjects to transfer their right and authority unconditionally to one man, than to stipulate for insecure, empty, or ineffectual conditions of liberty, and, by doing this, to pave the way for the most cruel slavery to fall upon their posterity. But, if I succeed in showing that the fundamental principles of the monarchical State which I have sketched in the

last chapter, are well secured, and cannot be disturbed without arousing the resentment of the majority of an armed people ; and further, that from these fundamental laws the peace and security of king and people alike follow ; and if I can deduce all this from the human nature which is to be found in all men, it will not be possible for any one to doubt that these are the best and the true foundations of the State" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 2).

But, while stipulations which do not express the real nature of the political relations that exist within the State, are a snare and a delusion to the people which trusts in them, and an irritating and objectless interference with the ruler's rights and functions, there *are* conditions which determine the very nature and efficiency of rule, and these can be embodied in a definite constitution, or be generally recognised as binding. To do this requires political wisdom and sagacity ; but it can be done, and it has been done by many nations, perhaps by all nations which have enjoyed any strong and stable existence. That is to say, these nations have grasped the principles which were the one soul or life of their political organisation, the principles which held it together, and gave power and authority to the rulers, freedom, safety, and happiness to the subjects. And, by clearly understanding, thinking, and willing them—whether they put them in writing or not—they have won for their kings, as well as for themselves, a power and a security of tenure which was realisable in no other way. For this means that they have attained a definite consciousness of the real conditions of all political authority, and have seen that the relation of king and subject is not that of end and means, or master and slave, but one of mutual advantage through which both ought to, and can, gain in equal measure.

The general consciousness of this amongst a people, whether it take the form of a definite legally-enacted constitution or not, is a priceless blessing and strength to any monarch. For if it restrain him from some forms of action, namely, those which the constitution of the State prevents or forbids, it enlarges indefinitely the sphere and range of action which would otherwise have been open to him, and it puts at his disposal a strong, resolute, and enlightened patriotism which, to the hand that can use it, is a hundred

times more powerful than the unquestioning obedience of a nation of slaves. The people which knows, and values, its fundamental laws, that is, the forms of life, the institutions, the kind of government, the objects of desire and ambition, which are distinctive of it, is capable of a cohesion, enterprise, confidence in its own resources and in the mutual loyalty and co-operation of all its members, of a devotion to its king and a reliance on his judgment which confer upon the ruler in such a State the most absolute power the world knows. While what is commonly called absolute power, namely, that exercised over those who recognise no fundamental laws except the king's will, and with whom 'to hear is to obey,' is the weakest and most unstable of all forms of rule.

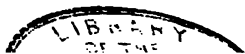
This distinction between the true absolute and the false absolute in political authority runs all through Spinoza's theory of the State, and a consideration of it throws much light on the point we are at present discussing. The false absolute assumes that the will of the ruler is entirely free and unlimited, that nothing is law except as he wills it, and that all has the force of law which he chooses should be law. This is the popular conception of the nature of complete and perfect authority, to be able to do as one wills without let or hindrance, to enjoy an unbounded and undefined freedom to command, and be under no obligation to obey any one, or have regard to any one's feelings or wishes. We call this an unlimited authority and regard the man who possesses it as a highly privileged and happy being.

Experience and theory have indeed combined to prove that such an unlimited power is very bad for the subjects and citizens, destructive of their liberties, and productive of insecurity, fear, inertia, and adulation amongst them. Thus the dangers of autocratic rule to the liberties of a people have been well recognised, and nations have sought by imposing checks, restraints, and limits upon their ruler's power to guard their liberties from his encroachment, and to keep him from overstepping the terms of his commission. Yet even this plan has only been a partial success. For it has proved a constant cause of bickering and fret between the sovereign and his

subjects, the one claiming that his legitimate authority and dignity were unjustly withheld from him, the other that he was trying to make himself the tyrant and not the father of his people. And such an ever-present cause of irritation between parties who must live in the closest relation to one another, is the worst foe to the mutual trust and confidence which should subsist between them.

Spinoza holds that the small measure of success which this plan has secured is due to the false assumption from which it starts, namely, that there is an inherent and essential incompatibility and opposition between the powers vested in the ruling Monarch or Council, and the liberty of the people. What is given to the one is supposed to be necessarily taken from the other. And hence the narrower the limits within which the monarch's authority and pretensions can be confined, the larger will be the measure of freedom left to his people; while the more he gets, or arrogates to himself, the less will be left for them. The relation of ruler and ruled in this way is reduced to a continual effort by each party to steal a march on the other, and get a larger share of the spoil for itself. The people seem to gain in power and influence when they can lessen the dignity and lower the pretensions of their Sovereign, while their star seems inevitably to go down as his rises.

It need occasion little surprise that this way of averting misgovernment has proved a very qualified success. A partnership that should be, and is meant to be, life-long, which begins in, and is continued with, feelings of mutual distrust, suspicion, and fear, cannot yield very high results, or be productive of much peace, happiness, or security to either party. The perpetual misunderstanding, jealousy, strife, and desire to overreach, to which it always gives rise, is the sign of its inherent unsoundness. But, in order to change this condition of things, it is no use denouncing the mutual suspicion, distrust, and contention. These will disappear only when the cause which produces them is changed. And, to find this cause is the sole way of curing those evil passions that keep alive the feelings of hostility between ruler and ruled. The cause Spinoza believes to lie in the tacit assumption made by



both monarch and subjects that their interests are necessarily antagonistic, and that what the one gains the other necessarily loses. This assumption he considers not only mistaken, but the very opposite of the truth. It is one form of that confused and inadequate thinking which, as bad will, or bad passions, breeds all the dissensions that arise between men. If both the monarch and his subjects would think out the conditions of their life, they would discover that what each withholds from the other is not gain but loss to both parties alike, and that what each gives is all that each really has.

This follows clearly enough from what was proved in a previous chapter. For, as all government is a relation of ruler and subject which is defined, and maintained, not by anything in the past, such as an original agreement or compact, but by an essential inter-dependence at each moment, it is inconceivable that the interest and welfare of the two parties should be antagonistic. Indeed, the one cannot possibly gain at the expense of the other, but must lose in prestige, in power, in authority, and in right in precisely the same measure in which it seeks to rob its partner. Where a relation is a necessary one, whatever is detrimental to the one term of it, is no less harmful to the other. It is just this which is hidden from those who regard unlimited sovereignty as the ideal of rule, and equally from those who would find a basis for popular liberties in a restriction of the king's power and privileges. The truth to be kept in mind is, that all sovereignty is always necessarily limited, or conditioned, or relative, because it *is* from first to last a relation. It is a power in, and over, and through, men's souls. It must, therefore, recognise and understand their life and endeavour, their objects of interest and desire, their hopes, and fears, and wishes; it must respect the human nature through which alone it can work, and it can accomplish nothing except as it does this. "When we say that a man can do with a thing which is at his own disposal, whatever he pleases, we assume that this power is to be defined not simply by the power of the agent, but also by the capacity of the object. If I say, for instance, that I may lawfully do whatever I like with this table, I do not surely mean that I have the right or authority (*jus*) to make

this table eat grass. Similarly, when we say that men in a State are not their own masters, but are subject to the authority of the State, we do not mean by this, that they lose their human nature and assume another, or that the State has the right and authority to make men fly, or—what is equally impossible—to make them regard with honour things which arouse in them only derision or disgust" (*Tract. Pol.*, IV. 4).

This fact, that the power or right of the State or ruler over the subjects not only depends on, but *is*, a relation, constitutes the one check upon autocratic and irresponsible government which is of any real efficacy. For this works not from without, but from within. It is not a limit to the sovereign power, but the condition of its existence and exercise. It therefore needs no other defence save its own necessity, and no sanction save the common life and common will. It can engender no distrust, suspicion, and jealousy between ruler and people, since it is the very tie which binds them together, and makes the one able to command and the other willing to obey. This essential relation determines at once the power of the State over its subjects, and also the limit of that power. For what it can do simply means what it can induce them to do. Its power depends "not simply on the power of the agent, but on the capacities of the patient." Hence its power is necessarily limited in many ways, indeed such limitation, or relativity, is of its very essence. It is limited by the conditions and qualities of its own nature. If it is to be a power over its subjects, it must not violate the very laws which make that power more than a name. But this is no real limitation, or restraint, any more than it is a restraint upon a man that he cannot be also a house and a field, or upon a piece of paper that it cannot have the qualities of a pen. The conditions that constitute a thing, and enable it to exercise effectively its own distinctive energies, cannot, with any propriety, be called a limitation of its powers.

Thus, when we bring into clear consciousness the conditions in the absence of which no State authority would, or could, exist, we are not limiting the range of action which would otherwise have been open to it, but only seeking to

show how it can attain its widest compass and most fruitful exercise. If I show a man who in the dark is about to walk straight over a precipice that, by taking another path, he will get safely to his destination, I am not limiting his power or freedom, but enlarging it. In pointing out the danger of a certain course, I do not make a limit where none previously existed, but only show one which is always there; and I rightly assume that if the man knew the real state of the case, he would not count the power and freedom of walking over the precipice a real power or freedom at all. Similarly, when we try to understand and define the conditions of all rule, we are not imposing an alien and external bondage upon a power that could exist and be maintained apart from it; but we are simply endeavouring to avert the consequences which ignorance of these conditions surely brings upon both ruler and people. We are seeking to know how this political instrument can be employed to the best advantage, and why some uses of it have been calamitous, while others have been rich in blessing.

Now, the chief element in all sovereignty is the attitude of the subjects. No ruler can alter this fact, or make it of less importance. For his power depends, from first to last, on the measure in which his functions are an integral part of their daily life. And hence, of all the enemies a State has to fear, none are so dangerous to it as its own citizens.

"A State undoubtedly has things which it should fear, and it is the less independent the greater cause it has for fear." "A State is always in greater danger from its citizens than from its enemies." "Though necessity has made statesmen and rulers devise many measures which lead men to live together in harmony, yet no State has ever been so organised that it has not more reason to fear its citizens than its enemies. . . . How often, for example, was the ever-victorious Roman Republic subdued and miserably oppressed by its own citizens. . . . Secure me, said Alexander, against internal disloyalty and domestic treachery, and I will not fear the dangers of the battle-field. . . . And, it is for this reason, that Kings who have usurped the sovereignty try to persuade their people that they are descended from the immortal gods" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 17).

Thus, there are things which the State, or the ruler, has no right to command, because it has no power to make men

obey such a command. And if it try to command and to enforce such actions, it thereby weakens its own authority or becomes less a law and an end to itself. For by attempting what it cannot do, it is offending against the laws and conditions of its own efficiency, and making itself an object of less respect and regard to its subjects.

"It is only in so far as subjects fear the power, or the penalties, of the State, or love the civil order, that they are not a law unto themselves, but are controlled by the law of the State. Hence all those things, the performance of which cannot be secured by rewards and penalties, fall outside of the sphere of State laws. . . . For, with what penalties can you induce a man to believe that the part is greater than the whole . . . or to love what he hates, or hate what he loves . . . or to bear witness against himself, or kill his parents. If we care still to insist that the State has the right, or the power, to give such commands, this assertion could only be taken in the same sense in which we say that a man has a right to be insane and out of his senses. For what else than a form of madness would that right, or law, be by which no one could be bound?" (*Tract. Pol.*, 3, 8). "We have also to bear in mind that those things which would arouse the resentment of the majority of the people, have no place at all within the sphere of State law. For it is certain that the pressure of a common fear, or the desire of avenging a common injury, will make men join together, since Nature herself will prompt them to do so. Now as the right and authority (*jus*) of the State means simply the common power of the people, it is certain that the power, and therefore the right and authority of the State, is diminished exactly in proportion to the occasion it itself gives for many feeling aggrieved by its action and conspiring against it" (*Ibid.*, § 9).

This enables us to understand in what sense it can, and in what sense it cannot, be said that the State is bound by law and can sin. If law be here taken to mean civil law, the State is not bound by this, and cannot transgress it. For civil law is what the State decrees, and it lasts only so long as the State wills that it should. The State cannot offend against any civil rule, seeing that any such rule ceases to be binding whenever the State wills its abrogation or supersession. But if law be taken to mean, not civil, but natural law, that is to say, the law which governs and controls everything in the universe, and is indeed one with the nature and activities of each particular object, then, in this sense, the State is subject to law, and can sin or trans-

gress. For it also is an object in that system, or order, within which all that exists and happens has a place. If it recognise its work and function, and the conditions of their efficiency, it will maintain itself in the world in virtue of those universal laws which enable it to become an essential element in human purpose and endeavour; while if it do not recognise the end of its existence, and the conditions of its own efficiency, the same universal laws will bring about its insecurity and its extinction.

"The question is frequently asked whether the sovereign power in the State is bound by laws, and whether it can sin? My reply is, that the terms law and sin are applied not only to the laws of the State, but also to those laws which govern all natural objects, and especially to the general rules of Reason; and hence we cannot say without qualification that the State is bound by no laws and cannot sin. For if the State were not subject to those laws, or rules, without which the State would not be a State, then we should have to regard the State as not a natural object at all, but a chimaera. A State then sins when it does, or permits, those things which tend to bring about its own ruin. It then sins, in the sense in which philosophers or physicians speak of Nature as sinning, that is to say, when it does anything contrary to the dictate of Reason. For a State is most independent, and most its own master, when it acts in accordance with the guidance of Reason, while in so far as it acts against Reason it is untrue to itself (*sibi deficit*) or it sins. . . . But, if we understand by law the Civil Law whose authority and maintenance depend on the State itself, and by sin or transgression that which the Civil Law forbids, that is to say, if these terms are employed in their usual sense, we cannot with any propriety say that the State is bound by laws and can sin. For the rules and causes of fear and reverence which the State is bound, in its own interest, to maintain, flow not from the civil law, but from Natural Right, since they can be vindicated, not by civil authority, but by the right and authority of war. Thus the State is bound by these conditions just as a man in the state of Nature is bound, if he wishes to be a law to himself and not to be his own enemy, to take care not to put an end to his own life. The observance of such a condition, however, is not a bondage, but the freedom of human nature" (*Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 4, §§ 4 and 5).

Thus, the only true and effective limits upon a ruler's power and rights are those which are inseparable from that power itself. These constitute the real restraints which it is the interest of both the sovereign and the subjects to discern. For they are always present and operative, whether they are

discerned or not. But if they are not seen to be ever active, they are as likely to be the instrument of punishment as that of blessing ; while if they are recognised, they produce that sense of common interest between ruler and subject, which necessarily begets mutual confidence and fidelity. The consciousness of these immanent, or divine, and inviolable conditions of sovereign power also removes that perpetual cause of dispeace and irritation which arises from the attempt to lay down the boundaries of the sovereign's power, and to determine what shall and shall not be lawful or permissible for him to do. Once a nation has attained to some clear consciousness of the nature, and the principles, of its own institutions and common life, and seen that the ruler has no power or authority save as he constitutes himself the organ and servant of these, it ceases to be nervous about the monarch overstepping his appointed sphere. For with well-established and highly valued forms of life and institutions, with a well-settled and organised social order, there is no power or authority which the king may not safely get. The freedom of going unchecked to his own ruin is the only freedom he does not have. But, in place of this, he enjoys a measure of power and authority which the most autocratic of rulers vainly sighs for.

Thus the only sovereignty that has any proper claim to the name of absolute, is that which rests on the will and consent of the citizens, or that which aims at and realises the welfare of the whole people. "Only that sovereign exercises an absolute sway, whose administration of State affairs carries with it the general consent." "Only the best political arrangements will render the laws well observed, and only in this way will the State enjoy an absolute right." "Equal fidelity of the people to their king and of the king to his people is the ideal security of the State." "If the foundations of a monarchical State be rightly laid, the Monarch will then be most his own master when he has most regard for the welfare of the people" (*Tract. Pol.*, 6, 5). "The King will be most a law unto himself, and will exercise the greatest authority, when he takes most account of the common interest of the people" (*Ibid.*, 7, 11). It is for this

reason that a Democracy furnishes the most perfect example of a rule which is wholly unlimited (*omnino absolutum*), for, as it cannot do other than aim at the common welfare, its sovereignty has therefore no limits, and "any laws which it makes do not curtail, but enlarge its freedom."

It follows from this further, that what is called absolute rule is in reality the least entitled to the name, being the feeblest and least enduring of all forms of government. It has least hold upon the people, it is most easily transferred from one man to another, it is a cause of fear and dispeace alike to the ruler and to the people, it knows no security, and it is its own worst enemy. These weaknesses and defects, which history and experience have fully illustrated, are not accidents which the autocrat may avert. They are of the essence of all authority which is synonymous with the unrestrained will of one man. A State which has no fundamental laws worked into the people's thought and endeavour has no strength or security for its permanence. It is the sport of chance; it subsists only by the charity, or the mutual jealousies, of its neighbours, and it knows none of that confidence between ruler and subject which makes a nation front danger with calmness and confidence. Thus the attempt to find security for the State in the unlimited will of one man is a blunder which necessarily brings its own baneful effects.

For while "experience seems to teach that it makes for peace and concord if all power is conferred on one man, seeing that no political order has continued so long without any noteworthy change as that of the Turks, while none have been so short-lived nor, we may add, so vexed by seditions, as popular or democratic States. But if slavery, barbarism, and solitude are to be called peace, then peace is the most wretched state in which men can spend their lives. . . . The transference of all power to one man makes not for peace but for slavery, as peace consists, not in the absence of war, but in a union or harmony of men's souls" (*Tract. Pol.*, 6, 4). "Moreover, it is a great mistake to suppose it even possible for one man to hold the sovereignty in the State. For right or authority (*ius*) is determined by power alone, and the power of one man is quite unequal to so great a burden. This is the reason why he whom the people have elected King, straightway seeks out Generals, or Councillors, or friends, and entrusts to them his own welfare and that of all. Hence a State which is, in name, an absolute monarchy, is in reality an aristocracy, but

not openly such, and therefore the worst kind of aristocracy. Moreover, when the King happens to be a child, or in ill-health, or borne down under the weight of years, he is King only in name, and the sovereignty is really exercised by those who have the administration of the chief affairs of State, or by those who are next-of-kin to the monarch. To say nothing of the fact, that a King enslaved by his passions often allows some concubine or disgraceful favourite to order all things according to their own licentious tastes" (*Ibid.*, § 5).

This furnishes an answer to the question, has not the monarch, in a State where his will is the only law, a perfect right to do as he pleases? The answer is, he has, if he likes to accept, and to will, the consequences which inevitably follow. But he has no power to do as he pleases, and to escape the results of doing so; for these results are God's inviolable will and decree. They are in fact part of the ruler's own deeds, and the curses of bad and imprudent government come home to roost with no less certainty than do the blessings of a wise and efficient administration of affairs. "I quite admit that the ruling powers in the State can lawfully treat as enemies all who do not entirely agree with them. But we are not now discussing what is lawful for them, but what is for their advantage. I grant that they may lawfully rule in the most oppressive way, and put their citizens to death on the slightest grounds. But no one will say that they can act in this way from the wise judgment of sound Reason. Yea, as these things cannot be done without grave danger to the whole State, we may even deny that the rulers have any absolute power, and consequently any absolute right or authority, to act in this way; for the right of the rulers is measured by their power" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 20).

Thus there are certain advantages, or apparent advantages, of absolute and uncontrolled rule which must be sacrificed in a well-constituted State. You cannot have at once the secrecy of counsel, and promptitude of action, which the unlimited discretion of one man may afford, and at the same time the steady support and loyal co-operation of citizens who have had a share in determining what should be done. And if the latter is, as we have seen that it is, an essential, and even the main, element in all sovereignty, it would be foolish to sacrifice it

for the sake of a lesser advantage. And moreover, even this lesser advantage turns out, on examination, to have no real steadiness or worth. For secrecy and promptitude are entirely *formal* excellences. They are advantageous, if the ends and purposes with a view to which they are exercised are for the welfare of the whole people ; but they become entirely baneful in their influence if they are, as they may as readily be, used to plot against the liberty of the people. They may be the direct instrument of a nation's undoing, if they are not wedded to settled laws and institutions and a common mind and will in, and through, which they are forced to work. Thus, if a people seems to lose something by dispensing with 'one man rule,' it does not really lose. For it thereby guards itself against the worst evil that can befall it. And while it may 'in an idle moment' wish for the secrecy of autocratic government, as well as for the public spirit, enterprise, and freedom of popular rule, it learns to reconcile itself to choosing the greater of two goods, or the lesser of two evils, and to renounce what it cannot have consistently therewith. The man who judges that he can live with more happiness in a rented house cannot also be as free to move as the man who has no house at all ; but he may still think himself better off, on the whole, in spite of this unavoidable disability.

These ideas Spinoza explains clearly in his sketch of a Monarchical State, in which a Council, or Parliament, popularly elected, is constituted an integral part of the legislative machinery. The King indeed makes the laws, but he is required not only to listen to the advice of his supreme Council, but also to choose and enact one of the views which has already found most, or at least considerable, support in this Council. Thus, all matters of high State policy are first submitted to the most thorough and prolonged discussion by both the people and the Parliament, and only after this is the King at liberty to give judgment regarding what should be done and decreed. An obvious objection to this form of State is, that everybody will know what is being discussed and devised, and the State's enemies will thus also have the advantage of knowing its plans and be in a better position to

frustrate them. To this objection Spinoza's reply is, "I quite admit that the designs of such a commonwealth can hardly be kept secret. But everyone will agree with me in saying, that it is much better that the righteous plans of a State should become known to the enemy, than that the unrighteous devices of tyrants should be hidden from the citizens. Those who are able to carry on public affairs in secret have the State absolutely in their power, and the same skill in plotting which they exercise in time of war against the enemy, they will employ in time of peace against the citizens. It cannot, indeed, be denied, that secrecy of purpose and action is often of advantage to a State; but no one will ever prove that a State cannot subsist without such secrecy. And, on the other hand, it is quite impossible to put the State absolutely within a single man's control, and at the same time to maintain its freedom. Hence, it would be the height of folly to run the risk of the greatest evil for the sake of avoiding a slight loss. For it has ever been the one song of those who thirst after absolute power, that the interest of the State requires that its affairs be conducted in secret, and much in the same strain. But the more such arguments disguise themselves under the mask of public welfare, the more oppressive is the slavery to which they will lead" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 29).

In a similar way Spinoza replies to the objection that by encouraging a local patriotism in each city, and thus decentralising the government, unity of thought and of action is hindered, seeing that where many councils have to discuss a matter, and then try to come to some common understanding with one another, much time will be lost in deliberation, and promptitude of action will be impossible. His reply is, that what is lost in one way will be much more than gained in another. For, if the State cannot, in this way, act so quickly, it will act to much more purpose when it does act. It will both have gained a better knowledge of what it is most advisable should be done, and it will have given the citizens a real comprehension of and interest in their own welfare which will make the State's action much more effective, strenuous, and well-maintained when it does take

action. If a nation can secure that the policy of its rulers will be for the public advantage, it can afford the time needed to define it, and put it in operation ; while quickness of judgment, and of action, may be dearly purchased. "For though it may be that while the Romans spend their time in deliberating, Sagunthus is perishing, it may also happen, in the opposite case, that when a few men are allowed to settle everything solely according to their own inclination, liberty and the common good perish. For men's minds are too dull to enable them at once to see through everything. Their intelligence is developed by reflection, by advice, by discussion, and by canvassing all kinds of plans they at last discover those which secure the approval of everybody, and which yet had not previously occurred to anyone" (*Tract. Pol.*, 9, 14).

But it is not merely for the State, or the citizens, that absolute uncontrolled rule is bad. It is equally bad for the rulers. It leaves them a freedom to go to their ruin (and even prompts them to take this broad road), which no well-constituted State should leave open. For, under no possible conditions can the King ever be more than a part of a whole society. This is one necessary limit, or condition, of his sovereignty. Further, the State is not, and can never be made, his property, nor can he do with it as he pleases. "For the fact that the King is the sovereign in the State, and holds this sovereignty by an absolute right, gives no warrant for the inference that he is at liberty to transfer it to any one he pleases, and to choose any one he wishes as his successor, nor for holding that this is what makes the King's son the rightful heir to the throne. For the King's will has the force of law only while he wields the sword of the State, since the right of ruling is defined by power alone. While, therefore, it is open to the King to resign the sovereignty, he may not transfer it to another save with the consent of the people, or with the consent of the more influential part of the nation. . . . On the death of the King the State in a certain manner perishes, and the civil state returns to the state of Nature, and consequently the supreme power naturally comes back to the people, and they have the

right to make new laws and abrogate old ones. Thus it is clear that no one has any right to succeed the King save he whom the people desire as his successor" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 25).

Again, a King with no law, or rule, save his own will, cannot reasonably be expected to prove anything but a tyrant. This is so, both because he is no less a human being though he is a King, and is therefore in no wise exempt from the frailties that are to be found in equal measure in all mortals; and also because the very nature of unlimited rule begets tyranny and oppression. Taking the first of these points, Spinoza insists that kings have no less need to be protected and guarded against the misjudgments, mistakes, ignorance, and inconstancy to which they are liable, than their subjects have. "All, both rulers and ruled, are men, and are therefore more eager for pleasure than for labour." Thus it is a duty which the State owes to those whom it has called to its most arduous task, to defend them, as far as a well-conceived and well-maintained civil order of life can, against the besetting sins that would otherwise weaken, or destroy, their power. "Both those who rule, and those who are ruled, ought to be restrained by the fear of punishment or loss, that it may not be open to them to sin with impunity or with profit to themselves" (*Tract. Pol.*, 10, 1). "The State should be so constituted and organised that all its members, the rulers as well as the ruled, shall *volens nolens* do that which the common interest requires. That is to say, it should be so ordered that all shall be obliged to live in accordance with the dictates of Reason, either from their own choice, or through compulsion, or by necessity. In other words, public affairs must be so arranged, that nothing which concerns the welfare of the community is entrusted wholly to the good faith and fidelity of any one. For no man is so watchful as not sometimes to be caught napping, nor so strong of soul as not to be sometimes overcome. And surely it is the height of folly to require of another what no one can attain in himself, namely, that he shall be more vigilant for another's interest than he is for his own, that he shall not be avaricious, or envious, or ambitious. It is specially foolish

when the man from whom we demand this, has, every day of his life, the very strongest incitements to all these emotions' (*Tract. Pol.*, 6, 3).

Thus it is no true kindness, or generosity, which puts a theoretically unlimited power into a monarch's hand, and flatters him with the fond delusion that all things are possible to him, and that his will is law; and then leaves him to discover by dearly-bought experience that many things are not possible to him at all, that his will is often impotent and in conflict with itself, and that a power greater than his own can 'put down the mighty from their seats and exalt them of low degree.' It were surely better for all parties to recognise freely and frankly that, neither in theory nor in practice is such an unlimited power possible. The subjects cannot give it, and the ruler cannot receive it. If either could happen, all sovereign power would be at an end. For rule that was absolute in this sense would be, not the ideal of power, but the ideal of impotence. He who could command anything would have no command at all, since no one would obey him. "If rulers will go as they please everything will go to ruin." And to have no fixed and settled order of life and principles of action and definite objects of desire and ambition in a community, that is, to have no well-established constitution, and fundamental laws, is the surest way to produce that royal madness which comes to those whom the gods would destroy. For the absence of such a constitution produces the belief that government has no eternal and inviolable laws which will inevitably bring about certain results according to the wisdom or the folly of those who administer it.

Spinoza points out that the same result is found in aristocratic, and especially in oligarchic States, where there is no fundamental constitution to which the rulers must have regard.

"In oligarchies the will of the Patricians, owing to the absence of rivalry, is least curbed by law. What then do we find? We find that, under such conditions, the Patricians jealously exclude the best men from the Council, and seek to have, as their colleagues, those who will act as their faithful henchmen. And so the condition of a State thus constituted

is much more wretched just because the election of Patricians depends simply on the will of a few men, a will that is left absolutely free, and untrammelled by any legal restraint" (*Tract. Pol.*, 11, 2).

Spinoza's other point, namely that it is of the very nature of unlimited power to beget tyranny and oppression, strengthens the conclusion just reached. For it shows that under such conditions, rule does by a natural and intelligible process weaken, instead of strengthening, the bonds between sovereign and subject; and thus it proves unlimited power to be a bad form of rule, as bad for the man who has to exercise it as for the people on whom it is exercised. The tyrant, like the criminal, is no more an inhuman monster than the other members of the State. He is the product of the spiritual conditions of life and labour which the State has given him, and, we should add, of the absence of those conditions of constraint and of restraint which it has failed to give him. He is striving to be, to do, and to get, within the limits, or the no limits, assigned to him what seems, in his own judgment, to promise him most happiness, peace, security, and power. His bad action is the result of the absence of those forces of constraint and restraint, of those objects of interest and endeavour, and of that sense of limit, which better education, better knowledge of men, better defined institutions, and a better organisation of the political order would have given him, to the mutual advantage of himself and his subjects.

If we ask why an absolute monarch almost inevitably becomes a tyrant, we shall find the answer in the poverty, and unsatisfying nature, of his so-called absolute power. A monarch, like every one else, desires to have some security of tenure in his office. He might have this, if he could depend on always acting with perfect wisdom, and never being lacking in self-restraint, vigilance, steadiness of purpose, courage, and resource. But this he cannot do. Indeed, a monarch with no law save his own will is less able to do it than a private citizen, whose aberrations and misjudgments and inordinate affections are always guided and controlled and corrected by a multitude of laws which are maintained for their special purpose. But a monarch with unlimited

power has no such kindly monitor, and he cannot, therefore, hope to maintain his power simply by the wisdom and prudence of his administration. The other alternative which is open to him for rendering his sovereignty secure, is to make the people afraid of him ; for though he cannot hope to please every one, he may succeed in making every one afraid of him. And this is the course he generally adopts, becoming a tyrant that he may remain a king. "He to whom the whole authority of the State has been handed over, will always fear the citizens more than the enemy, and he will therefore endeavour to look after his own interests, and, instead of caring for his subjects, he will plot against them, and especially against those of them who are distinguished for their wisdom or their wealth" (*Tract. Pol.*, 6, 6). Spinoza also suggests this as one explanation of Machiavelli's aim in writing *The Prince*. "Machiavelli has already shown in detail, with his usual great acuteness, what means the Prince whose sole motive is lust for power must employ, if he is to establish and maintain his sovereignty. The object which the author had in view in doing this does not seem quite clear. If, however, he had a good end in view, as is to be presumed in the case of a wise man, it seems to have been to show, how little it avails to put the Tyrant out of the way, while the causes which make the Prince a tyrant, not only are not got rid of, but are in this way the more strengthened. . . . Perhaps Machiavelli wished also to show how careful a free people must be not to commit its welfare unconditionally to a single man. For unless he is vain, and thinks he can please every one, he must live in daily fear of treachery, and thus he is forced to look to his own safety, and to plot against the people instead of devising measures for their welfare. I am the more inclined to believe this regarding a man of such sagacity, as it is well known that he espoused the cause of freedom, and has also given most salutary counsels for defending it" (*Tract. Pol.*, 5, 7).

But a ruler who sets himself to make his subjects afraid of him does, at the same time, give himself greater cause for fear than before. Tyrants are most afraid of, and have most reason for being afraid of, their own subjects, soldiers, and

Councillors. "He quickly perishes whom his soldiers wish out of the way; and it is certain that a King's greatest peril always comes from those who are nearest him. Hence, the fewer his Councillors are, and the more power they thus exercise, the greater is the danger which the King has to apprehend of their transferring the sovereignty to some one else. Nothing gave David so much apprehension as the news that his Councillor Achitophel had gone over to Absalom" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 14). Thus, instead of absolute power being an unqualified power or freedom in the ruler, it is, even for himself, the weakest, most uncertain, and most trying kind of rule. For "he who has causes of fear is, in that measure, not his own master, or a law to himself." That is to say, he cannot get doing what he would wish to do if these causes of fear were absent. He has to regulate his conduct so as to be on his guard against those who would do him harm; and he is, therefore, under the control of, or governed by, those whom he needs to fear. In this respect the absolute ruler is, of all men, the most enslaved and least of all able to do as he pleases, for he has more causes of fear than any one else in the community. Thus we arrive at the conclusion, that the more unlimited a monarch's power is, the less power and freedom does he possess. "The more absolutely the right, or authority, of the State is transferred to the King, the less is he his own master, or a law and an end to himself, and the more wretched is the condition of his subjects" (*Tract. Pol.*, 6, 8). Thus the condition which seems the happiest of all is really the most wretched, for the absolute ruler, in order to gain his own safety and security, needs to have recourse to those measures which inevitably alienate his people from him, and make him go in daily fear of his life.

This practical contradiction between the end at which absolute rule aims, and the end to which it is driven by its own logic, is further shown by the fact that while unlimited power vested in one man seems to give him the best possible security, it really gives him almost no security at all. No monarch is so easily dethroned, and replaced by another, as the autocrat. None has so precarious a tenure

of office as he. None is so much at the mercy of any ambitious minister, or noble, or military general. It is for this reason that the more absolute any ruler's power is, the more fear does he have of being supplanted. And he has most to fear from those who are nearest him, in rank, in power, and in place. This is why the Turkish tyrants—whom Spinoza regards as the most perfect example of the false absolute in rule—count it even “a religious duty to put all their brothers to death.” And the explanation of this is, that the insecurity of their sovereignty prompts them to take such ruthless ways of maintaining their own authority, modes of action that would never even be thought of if the conditions of their rule were more sane and more stable. It is the inherent precariousness of one-man-rule which makes the monarch a tyrant. “The more absolutely the right and authority of the State has been transferred to one man, the more easily can it be transferred from one man to another.” “Perezius very well proves that the exercise of an absolute sovereignty is highly dangerous for the Prince, highly odious to the subjects, and opposed to both divine and human ordination, as numberless instances have shown.” “If all power be transferred entirely to one man, it can then be far more readily transferred from one man to another. Two common soldiers, for instance, undertook to transfer the sovereignty of the Roman empire, and succeeded in doing so” (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 14).

The conclusion to be drawn from this argument is, that unlimited power is bad for every one, a fatal gift to the ruler, and a wretched oppression for the people. Both alike would gain by the discovery of its hollowness; and it would be good for both if the real nature and conditions of sovereignty were explicitly laid down and securely embedded in a national constitution. In this way, not only would ruler and people alike be saved from the self-deception that law is simply the arbitrary caprice of one man's will; but also both would be forced to keep before them, and to have regard to, those conditions of secure and harmonious common life which never can be violated without consequences calamitous to both the monarch and his subjects.

CHAPTER XXIV.

NATURE AND CONDITIONS OF A STATE'S SECURITY.

THE further point which has yet to be proved is, that the security of the ruler and the liberty of his subjects are inseparable, his authority and their happiness being but different aspects of the same thing ; and that this identity of interest is symbolised, and furthered, by a good constitution or system of law. For in this way both the monarch and his subjects will feel that they are making the most of themselves, and that the relation which binds them inseparably together is not a limitation of their freedom and power, but the soul, and the essence of it.

There are, then, two interests which every constitution that is really to work must include and do justice to. It must, on the one hand, make it the direct interest of the ruler to do what is also for the common welfare. And it must make it the direct interest of each subject to yield obedience to the ruler's commands. To take the latter point first. Men will only obey when they will, on the whole, in their own judgment, gain more, or do better for themselves, by yielding, than by refusing to yield such allegiance. They have no right, or duty, to give up the government of the lives which God has bestowed upon them, except as they judge that some one else will enable them to rule them to their own greater advantage. This, therefore, is one inviolable side of the relation between King and subject. "None but utter barbarians will allow themselves to be made slaves, useless to themselves." And no civil authority has any greater sanction, or right, than the welfare which it enables

each man to desire and to attain. The soul of all authority is always the goodness, or advantage, or the hold over the world and over objects of desire and of satisfaction, which it bestows upon the individuals who live under its sway. The distinction which Spinoza draws between a citizen and a slave brings out this point clearly. "Some one may raise the objection that by requiring the citizens to obey all the State's commands, we make them slaves. But it is quite a mistake to suppose that, to act in obedience to some command, is to be a slave, and, to act as one pleases, a free man. For he is most enslaved who is the slave of his own passions, and is so mastered by them that he can neither discern nor do what is for his welfare; while he alone is a free man, who lives with his whole soul according to the guidance of Reason alone. Action from a command, that is, obedience, does indeed, in some measure, lessen a man's freedom. But what makes a man a slave is not his having to act according to a command, but the reason or ground for the action being commanded. If the end of the action is not the welfare of the agent himself, but that of him who commands it, then the agent is a slave, and of no use to himself. But, in a Republic or State, the welfare of the whole people, not that of the ruler, is the supreme law. Hence he who obeys the sovereign of the State in all respects should not be called a slave, useless to himself, but a subject. And the community enjoys the highest measure of freedom whose laws are securely based on sound Reason; for in it every one can be free if he will; that is to say, every one can live with all his soul in accordance with the guidance of Reason. For the same reason, children are not slaves, although they are bound to obey all the commands of their parents; since the parents' commands have mainly in view the welfare of their children. Thus it is important to recognise the great difference there is between a slave, a child, and a subject, and we may distinguish them thus. A slave is one who is bound to obey a master's orders, these having regard only to the welfare of him who gives the orders. A child is one who does in accordance with his parent's command what is for the child's own welfare. Lastly, a subject is one who

does, from the command of the sovereign, what is for the welfare of the whole community, and consequently likewise for his own" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16).

That is to say, when men have rulers to whom they yield up their rights, and whom they undertake to obey, their one end and aim is to gain thereby a richer and better life than they could otherwise secure. If this end is not attained and maintained, the renunciation of rights and the obligation of obedience are *ipso facto* at an end. "Men endowed with Reason never so give up their rights as to cease to be men, and let themselves be treated like brute beasts." The welfare of the citizens is the *robur et vita* of all sovereign power, and national patriotism; and this welfare means not simply the safety of their lives, but the number and value of the good things which give meaning and worth to their existence.

But the other side of the relation between sovereign and subject is no less important, namely, that the State be so organised that it is to the ruler's direct personal advantage to do what the Common welfare requires. It is no more his duty to sacrifice his own happiness, and welfare, than it is the duty of his meanest subject; and no State has any power to exact, or right to demand, such a sacrifice. Its business is to constitute itself in such a way that the monarch will not find it profitable to himself to act contrary to the common good. But if it try to prevent him seeking and gaining what seems to himself most for his advantage, it is violating a necessary law of its own prosperity. And this law is violated, when the ruler has no proper guarantee for the security of his office and of his own tenure of it, but is only a ruler on sufferance, and liable to be superseded at any moment. This insecurity inevitably produces the very evil it was designed to prevent. It breeds distrust, suspicion, fear, and enmity, however little the people or the king may have intended this result. For no one will act with any confidence, or energy, or decision, who does not have settled conditions of life and labour.

Further, a ruler will not be a good ruler, if the duties and responsibilities of office are imposed upon him, and the

power needful for discharging them, is withheld from him. He will not be content to be accountable for the State's security and peace, and at the same time be liable to interference from those who, without any such responsibilities, claim the right to determine what should, and should not, be done. Nothing is so sure to lead to weakness, misrule, and anarchy as such an *imperium in imperio*.

Again, a ruler will not be zealous in enforcing a body of law which has been made without any regard to his sovereignty, or to his integral place in the body politic. He will not play a great part, if the constitution he is expected to maintain did not mean him to play any part at all. No efficient government has any place for supernumeraries; and a people which desires to be ruled by a monarch must so frame its political system that he will have an essential place in it, and will have the one really effective motive for defending and maintaining it, that he is thereby doing also what is most for his own interest.

Spinoza finds in these ideas an explanation of the instability of the Hebrew State when it was changed into a Monarchy. For

"What else is there that kings can less endure than to reign in a precarious way, and to have to submit to an *imperium in imperio*? Those who were themselves raised from a private station to a throne might be content with the honour of their rank. But when their sons succeeded to the kingship, they began to change everything in order that they might hold the sole sovereignty of the State. This was, in great part, withheld from them, seeing that the authority to make and interpret the laws was not vested in them, but in the High Priest who kept the laws in the Holy Place and interpreted them to the people. Thus the kings, as well as the subjects, were bound by the laws, nor might they lawfully abrogate them, or enact new ones of equal authority. Further, the Hebrew Kings lacked the full authority of sovereigns, because the rights of the Levites disqualified the king, no less than his subjects, on the ground that they were unconsecrated persons, from meddling with sacred affairs. And lastly, the Hebrew King was only a king on sufferance, seeing that the whole security of his rule depended entirely on the will of another man, namely, the man who could claim to be a prophet. We see, for example, how great was the freedom with which Samuel commanded Saul in everything, and how easy it was for him, because of Saul's one bad action, to transfer the kingdom to David. Hence the Hebrew Kings had

both to endure an *imperium in imperio*, and their tenure of office was a precarious one.

"It was this insecurity, and lack of authority, which led them to allow shrines to be raised to other gods, so that they might no longer be under the necessity of consulting the Levites. And it was the same cause which led them to seek out other prophets who would prophesy in God's name in opposition to the true prophets. This latter attempt was never indeed successful. For the prophets, prepared for all emergencies, simply waited for a more favourable time, namely, the accession of a new monarch, knowing that his hold on power is precarious so long as the memory of his predecessor is fresh in men's minds. And they were then easily able to induce, by their divine authority, some king, with opposite views, and distinguished for his virtues, to vindicate the divine law, and to take lawful possession of the kingdom, or of part of it. But even the Prophets were not able to bring about any lasting improvement in this way. For, although they got rid of the tyrant, the causes which produced him still remained. And thus all that they really did was to buy a new tyrant with the best blood of the citizens. Thus there was no end to the contentions and civil wars which arose; the reasons for violating the divine law remained the same as before, and in fact these could not have been got rid of except by a complete change in the organisation of the State" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 17).

That is to say, the insecurity of the Hebrew monarchy came from introducing a king, and making him responsible for its peace and safety, and yet denying him the power, freedom, and authority which could alone enable him to fulfil his duty with satisfaction to his people. Either there should have been no king, seeing that the political system was designed without regard to his place and function; or else, if a king was necessary, the system should have been so rearranged and modified that he would have as much power and authority as he had responsibility. But, to lay upon his shoulders the burden of empire, and withhold from him the right to decide for himself what should and should not be done, was certain to produce those very calamities which involved both king and people in a common ruin.

Spinoza brings out another aspect of this truth, when, in a sketch of an Aristocratic State, where the sovereignty is vested in a supreme Council, he shows the great importance of making such arrangements, as will secure that it shall consist of the wisest and most experienced men in the State. In

this way, its foundations will be firm and immovable, and the members of Council will take an interest, and a pride, in carrying on its affairs themselves ; while, if such sure foundations are not laid, the Council will become a body of nobodies, and the decisions of the Council will be simply the judgments of secretaries and other officials, into whose hands everything will fall, to the loss, and, it may be, the destruction of the State.

" Indeed, a State will be less or more liable to this misfortune, according as it has a good or a bad constitution. For the freedom of a State whose foundations are not firmly based can never be maintained without risk. This is the reason why the Patricians, wishing to avoid this risk, choose from the people, as their officials, men ambitious of reputation, and then, when the political sky gets overcast, they can yield them up as victims to appease the wrath of those who plot against freedom. But, when the foundations of freedom are laid with proper stability and security, the Patricians will wish to have themselves the honour of maintaining it, and will be eager that the wise administration of State affairs should be based solely on their counsels " (*Tract. Pol.*, 8, 44).

Thus the security of the sovereign in the State is so interconnected with the peace and happiness of the subjects, that neither is possible without the other. If the ruler is not stable on his throne, the liberties of the people will bear part of the penalty ; and if the people are happy and contented, it is a proof that the authority of the ruler is ample and well-maintained. It would not be correct to call one of these the cause of the other, as they are so dependent on one another, that they constitute a whole which may be read indifferently from either side. It is the highest evidence of a nation's political genius, that it can keep its monarch from willing or desiring any good for himself, save that with which the prosperity of the people is identified ; while it is the best testimony to a king's complete and perfect authority, that the people will no good for themselves in which his "deliberate will," or the fundamental law of the State, is not an integral element.

Spinoza's argument is, that this identity of interest is always present in every political order. But men do not always see that this is how the case stands. And it is because they do not, that they are so eager to filch some-

thing from the royal prerogatives to add them to the popular liberties. So long as the indissoluble nature of the bond that unites ruler and people is not discerned, the ruler will try to enrich himself, and enlarge his power, by impoverishing his subjects, and weakening their strength; and the people will try to provide for their own safety, and freedom, by narrowing, and checking, and thwarting the exercise of the supreme power. But if they once saw clearly what each of these courses involves, they would no longer spend their strength in this unprofitable way. For the ruler who impoverishes, and oppresses, his subjects, is hastening his own fall; and a people which seeks to lessen its ruler's dignity, and limit his power, is encouraging the forces that make for lawlessness and mutual misunderstanding. To realise the unity of interest which the relation of sovereign and subject necessarily involves, is the one way of getting rid of both of these forms of unproductive labour. For those who see that for weal, and for woe, their fortunes are inseparable, will no longer be anxious to weaken their own power in, and through, and over others. If a ruler is rich and powerful and secure only in the affection and loyalty of his people, and a people is happy and united only in the dignity, power, and authority of its ruler, the question can no longer be, should the ruler or the subjects enjoy the greater degree of influence? For, if we can secure that the strength and dignity of each shall come to it only in and through the whole, we shall have raised the State above such petty squabbles. The nation will feel that the wisdom of its ruler is one of its greatest assets, and that the more absolute and unlimited the authority or ascendancy he gains over their souls, the more reason have they to be proud of him as one of God's best gifts to them. While the ruler will have in the happiness and prosperity of his people the one infallible proof that he reigns over them by divine right, and he will gain therefrom the one security for his own continuance in power.

In this way it will be seen that, while "both Reason and experience show most clearly that the preservation of the State depends mainly on the loyalty of the subjects, and on

their virtue and steadfastness in carrying out its commands," yet this steadfast loyalty and virtue are in turn dependent on the wisdom, prudence, and energy of those who manage the State's affairs and direct its policy. Whatever, therefore, secures either of these results will secure the other as well. It is from this standpoint that Spinoza estimates the goodness, or excellence, of a constitution, or political order. It ought to be so adapted to a nation's own circumstances, and conditions of life, that it at once affords to the king the greatest measure of security, authority, and influence, and to the people the greatest measure of peace and freedom. These two results are the counterparts of one another, and not one another's rivals. "From the principles of the monarchical government we have just sketched, there will ensue to the king great security in the exercise of his sovereign power, and to the citizens equal security for the maintenance of peace and freedom" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 15). "If a monarchical State is to have any permanence, the foundations on which the structure is to be reared must be firmly based. For in this way the monarch will enjoy security and the people peace."

This principle of the identity of interest between sovereign and subject as the one divine law of all political greatness, Spinoza works out in detail in the sketch of Monarchical and Aristocratic institutions which occupies the later part of the *Tractatus Politicus*. This development of the principle we shall consider directly. But it will make his meaning clearer, if we here note two illustrations of it which he brings forward. The one is taken from the kingdom of Arragon, the other from the Hebrew State.

"I am loath to pass over in silence one instance which seems to me deserving of notice, namely, the commonwealth of Arragon. For the men of Arragon were characterised at once by their singular loyalty to their kings, and by the steadfastness, no less great, with which they maintained inviolate the constitutional laws of their State. For, as soon as they had freed themselves from the Moorish yoke, they determined to elect a king. But, being unable to agree among themselves as to the conditions on which he should

hold office, they determined to consult the Roman Pontiff on the matter. And he, in this case truly playing the part of the Vicar of Christ, reproved them for being so obstinately set on having a king, in spite of the warning instance of the Hebrews. He added, however, that if they held to their resolution, they should first, before electing a king, see that institutions which were both equitable and suited to the genius of the people were firmly established, and that, in particular, they should create a supreme Council which, like the Lacedaemonian Ephors, should be a check upon the kings, and should have absolute right of jurisdiction in all disputes that might arise between the king and the citizens. This advice they followed. They established such laws as seemed to them most equitable; and they appointed as supreme interpreter of these laws, and therefore as supreme judge, not the king, but the Council. This Council is called the Seventeen, and its President the Chief-Justice. This President and Council having been elected, not by vote, but by lot, and holding their offices on a life-tenure, had complete authority to recall and to quash all judgments given against any citizen by other tribunals, whether civil or ecclesiastical, or even by the King himself. Thus every citizen had the right of summoning even the King himself before this Court. . . . These institutions having been established in harmony with public opinion, remained for an incredibly long period inviolate, and were productive of no less fidelity on the part of the Monarchs toward their subjects, than of loyalty on the part of the subjects toward their sovereigns" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 30).

In a similar way the Hebrew State was permeated in its best period by the same sense of unity of interest between ruler and people. The ruler's power was the wisdom which enabled him to understand what was best for the people in the peculiar position in which they stood as a host of newly-emancipated slaves, and thus enabled him also to adapt his laws and regulations to the peculiar mind, will, and heart which such a prolonged slavery had produced in them. And the reason of the people's obedience was the secure life, the many advantages, the restraint and constraint, neither so

severe as to make them feel again enslaved, nor so lax as to leave them without guidance from without, while as yet they had not learned to guide themselves. They felt that they were obeying, or being ruled, for their own advantage and happiness; and this was to them, as it has been to every other nation, the one infallible proof that their ruler ruled over them by divine right. It was the excellence of the Hebrew political constitution, that it gave equal security for the exercise of sovereignty by the ruler, and for the peace, happiness, and prosperity of the people. "It showed what sovereign power must bestow upon the subjects for the greater security and growth of the State." "It was a constitution which had power over men's souls, and could so control both those who ruled, and those who were ruled, that the latter did not become disloyal, nor the former tyrants" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 17).

How it succeeded in doing this, Spinoza proceeds to show, and his explanation casts much light on the nature of his principle (see *Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 5 and 17). When the Hebrews escaped from their Egyptian bondage, they were entirely unfit to retain the sovereign power in their own hands, or to enact laws by the common consent and judgment of the whole people; since they had neither the intelligence requisite for devising them, nor the capacity required for maintaining them. They had learned how to obey another's will, but they had not learned to obey a law made by themselves. Hence, it was impossible for them to live in harmony, except by one man having supreme power to command, to make laws and interpret them. This sovereign position Moses easily attained, because he excelled all the rest of the people in divine *virtus*, and showed, by many unquestionable tokens, that he had such pre-eminence. Thus it was this divine *virtus* in which he excelled which enabled him to make laws for the people. And, in virtue of his wisdom, he saw that a stable government would be possible, only if the laws were so framed as to lead the people to do their duty with good will rather than from fear. To this end he, by divine wisdom and command, introduced religion into the State, that the people might regard obedience to the laws as a

religious service rather than as a bondage. Moreover, he bound them to himself by many services, and, through divine inspiration, promised them many benefits in the future. And he did not make the laws too severe. Lastly, as the people whom he had to govern had been accustomed only to slavery, and had not learned to act for their own welfare, it was necessary that they should have the most precise, and detailed, guidance of their conduct by some one who would, in their own interest, take the place of the master they were wont to obey. Moses recognised this when he laid down the most minute regulations for their conduct, and left almost nothing to their own discretion. And this was the aim even of those elaborate ceremonies which they were expected to practise.

Now the excellence of the early Hebrew political order was that it exercised a salutary influence, both positively and negatively, on rulers and people alike. Its influence on the rulers was due chiefly to the following features. I. It placed the interpretation of the nation's laws in the hands of others, and made it the sole interest and dignity of a special class to maintain them and interpret them. Also, the people were taught to know, and to love, their laws and institutions. Thus the rulers were forced in their own interest to be very careful to administer everything in accordance with the prescribed laws. For, as the people knew and valued so highly their own laws, any ruler who wished to be held in honour must act in accordance with them. He who did so would be held in reverence by his subjects as the servant and vicegerent of God ; while he who acted otherwise would draw upon himself the most bitter hatred of his subjects. II. Another wholesome influence was the provision that all the citizens of fit age should be soldiers, and that the ruler should have no power to engage any mercenaries. This arrangement was a most effective one for restraining the unbridled licence of the rulers ; for oppression of the people is possible only to rulers who can maintain a body of paid troops. " Again, there is nothing which exercises a greater restraint upon princes than the freedom characteristic of citizen-soldiers whose courage, toil, and blood have gained

for the State its freedom and its glory. Amongst the Macedonians this was long a safeguard for the liberties of the people. And if even in a secular State, where the rulers commonly arrogate to themselves the whole credit of the victories won, the freedom of a citizen-soldiery acts as a restraint upon the rulers, this would be much more the case amongst the Hebrews, as *they* fought not for the glory of their rulers, but for the glory of God, and went out to fight only if God approved of them doing so." III. The Hebrew rulers held office only by the sanction of religion. Hence, if any of them became unfaithful to the religion of the nation, or attempted to violate the religious rights of any one, he might lawfully be deprived of his office. IV. This regard for religion was made still more effective by the supreme right of declaring God's will which was vested in the Prophets. This made it necessary for the rulers to walk warily; since, if they oppressed their subjects, the prophet, with his words of fire, found it easy to inflame the people against him, and have him deposed. While, on the other hand, if the ruler managed the affairs of the State well, he had little to fear from any prophet; since, secure of the people's loyalty, he could call the prophet before him, examine whether he were of approved life, whether he could give sure proofs of his title as a prophet, and whether what he wanted to utter in God's name was consistent with the recognised teaching and common laws of the nation. And, if he could produce no sufficient proofs of being a true prophet, or if his teaching was at variance with the national institutions, the ruler might lawfully put him to death; while, if he could show that he was a true prophet, and his message a salutary one, then what he said would be received on the authority and testimony of the ruler and go to increase that authority. V. The ruler had no pre-eminence over the other citizens in birth, nor had he any hereditary right to administer the affairs of State. His ability and his age were his only title. VI. The rulers and the soldiery were saved, by the organisation of the State, from having anything more to gain from war than from peace. For, as the army consisted solely of the citizens, it was the same men who had to conduct both

military and civil affairs. "He who in the camp was a soldier was a citizen in the public assembly ; an officer in time of war was a judge in time of peace ; and the general in the camp was the ruler in the State. Thus no one could have any wish for war for the sake of war, but only in the interest of peace and for the defence of freedom."

These principles of the earlier Hebrew political order Spinoza regards as, on the whole, well-conceived and well-secured provisions for directing the energies of the rulers into channels that would bring equal advantages to both parties, and for diverting their energies from other channels that would have brought disaster to both. The nation's fundamental laws were well-secured, and deeply set in the national consciousness, so that no ruler could possibly hope to gain even an immediate and temporary advantage for himself by attempting to violate or overthrow them. And this was the best security that any people could have for good government and freedom from oppression.

But, if the national political order of the Hebrews exercised a wholesome impelling and restraining influence upon their rulers, its influence upon the people was no less pervasive and valuable. For such a political order as that under which they lived was bound to produce in the souls of the citizens so extraordinary a love to their country that to forsake it, or be disloyal to it, was the last thought that would occur to them. In and through those peculiar laws, and forms of life, there sprang up an intensity of national and patriotic feeling, which the world has never seen surpassed or even equalled. For their institutions, customs, ceremonies, rules of life, rites, language, literature, and religion so entered into, and became part of, themselves, that not all the buffets of adverse fortune have been able to loosen the tie that binds them to one another as members of the same nation. The explanation of this intensity of national sentiment Spinoza finds, not in any peculiar physical, or innate qualities in each individual Jew, but in the peculiar laws and conditions under which they lived ; for it is a "difference of law and institution which alone distinguishes one nation from another."

What was it then that made "the discipline of obedience"

to which the Hebrews were submitted so successful, that they would suffer any extremity rather than live quietly under a foreign yoke? It was mainly the identification of patriotism with religion, and of religion with patriotism. Their God was theirs alone. Their kingdom was God's kingdom, and his only kingdom. They were the sons of God, and all the other nations were his enemies. Hence it became a religious duty to hate them with a fanatical passion, and to wage against them a ruthless extermination, extending even to their women and little children. For a Jew, with such a faith, to swear allegiance to any foreign power was to deny his God. And for the same reason, for a Hebrew to betray his country, the chosen abode of the God whom he worshipped, was a depth of baseness and depravity for which no suffering could atone. Even to migrate from his country was considered by the Jew a disgrace, and even a crime; because the worship of God was not allowed to be practised except within his native country. Its soil alone was sacred or holy, every other being considered profane and unclean. David for example complains that, in being driven from his own country, he has to go and serve other gods. This was the reason why banishment was not a form of punishment in use amongst the Hebrews; banishment meant estrangement from God.

Thus, the love of the Hebrew to his country was not simple patriotism, it was also an act of piety. And it was so fostered and strengthened by daily worship that it became an essential part of his nature. This had also as its negative side, hatred of all other nations; and this hatred was confirmed in him by the usages and customs of his daily life, these being not only different from, but the very opposite of, those of other peoples. Thus the antipathy of the Jew to the men of every other nation was firmly planted in his nature, as not only a duty to his country, but as also a duty to his God. And this hatred was yet more strengthened when other nations returned it. Both reason and experience, therefore, show that the wonderful steadfastness and courage which the Hebrews exhibited in defence of their country, was due mainly to the things we have mentioned, namely, the freedom of their civil order, devotion to their country, unlimited right

over men of all other nations, a hatred of them that was not only lawful but pious, peculiar customs and rites.

But in addition to this, there was another firm and enduring bond which secured the loyalty of the Hebrew citizen, namely, the advantages which this State offered him, and maintained for him, above all others. In no State had the subjects such ample and well-protected rights to their property ; seeing that each man had an equal portion of land, of which he was always the owner, and which was restored to him at the year of Jubilee, if he had been driven by poverty to sell it. Again, in no State were the poor so well looked after as in this one, since charity to one's neighbour, that is to one's fellow-citizen, was, to the Hebrew, the highest of religious duties. Thus the constitution of the Hebrew State attracted to itself the utmost devotion of its citizens, because it was worthy of that devotion, since it secured to them that real welfare and happiness and mutual co-operation for the sake of which the State is called into existence.

Other features of the constitution of the Hebrews which helped not only to bind them to their country, but also to obviate civil wars, and take away causes of strife, were such as these. No one served his equal, but all served God only. Love and charity toward one's fellow-citizen were considered the highest act of piety, and this devotion was the more fostered by the fact that charity and love were allowed no other sphere of exercise. Even the exacting "discipline of obedience," to which they were trained, contributed to keep them entirely devoted to their country and its laws. For their whole life and their every action was directed for the best through some determinate prescription. They were directed how to plough, when to plough, what animals they should yoke together, how and when to reap, etc. In a word, their whole life was one continuous round of obedience. And they became so completely accustomed to such obedience to law, that it was to them no longer a bondage, but a freedom ; and for the same reason none of them sought what was forbidden to them, but only what was enjoined upon them.

In this way a wise and prudent system of political order was able to make the relation of ruler and subject one of the

highest mutual advantage, and thus to prevent the profitless disputes that would otherwise have arisen regarding what the ruler might, and might not, do, and what liberties the people might, and might not, retain. Spinoza lays emphasis on these instances of successful government, because they furnish an undoubted proof that the welfare of a people and of its sovereign is one and the same, just as the instances of absolute or unlimited power vested in one man showed that the ill-fare of both sovereign and subjects was one and the same.

What he contends for, therefore, is that a State can be so constituted that the monarch will always seek the common welfare, and that the subjects will always be loyal to its laws. In this way, it will no longer be dependent on the fidelity of any one man, since the better organised it is, the less power will any man have apart from the whole order of life, and the distinctive institutions which are the common soul or will of the community. If any one seek to overthrow, or act disloyally by, that national life, he will be made at once to realise that his attempt is foredoomed to failure, and that he stands to gain nothing, and risks the loss of everything, by acting in this way. Thus, while no political order can secure that the ruler shall choose the interest of his people above his own, it can secure that that *conatus sese conservandi*, or impulse to seek one's highest and most enduring satisfaction, which is the essence of a king no less than of a peasant, shall gain no power or happiness save in and through those ends which are for the abiding welfare of all the members of the State. And such a secure order of life will necessarily at the same time bring to the citizens those blessings, advantages, comforts, and means of progress which are the content and reality of all civil obedience and patriotism.

The chief political principles requisite for producing this sense of common interest between ruler and people, Spinoza works out with some care. For while the common interest is always really present, this being in fact the 'eternal truth' of all civil sovereignty, yet men are very slow to understand it, and they can learn to under-

stand it at all only by a gradual process. All political arrangements may be said to have this single end in view, namely, to teach all who are within the State, 'by line upon line and precept upon precept,' that the weakness, discomfort, unhappiness, or crime of any class in the State casts its baneful influence upon every other, while the welfare and highest activity of any part is also the life and strength of the whole. All political arrangements that compel men to recognise this—whether the interest which the men themselves seek be a wide or a narrow one, or, in Spinoza's language, whether they are led by Reason or by passion—are good and desirable. Of course, the detail of such arrangements must be relative to the particular nation, and its conditions, and stage of development. But certain general ideas can, Spinoza holds, be laid down which are effective and valuable in the case of every free or civilised nation.

These are: I. that the State should be the source of all civil rights, and should have at its disposal all the nation's resources, that it may maintain its independence against all aggression either from without or from within; II. that the natural rights which men give up, as individuals, should return to them with richer content and greater security in virtue of their citizenship; III. that the State should openly sanction what it cannot prevent, namely freedom of thought, of speech, and of religious belief; IV. that the fundamental laws and institutions of the State should be zealously guarded by a special tribunal, and provision made for checking automatically any violation of these 'laws of national health'; V. that the rights and duties of both rulers and subjects should be well conceived, well defined, and well enforced; VI. that peace and not war should be made the direct interest of every one in the State; VII. that the citizens should all be on a footing of equality.

The first three of these principles are leading thoughts which we shall treat in detail in the following chapters. The other principles we shall consider in this place. To take the first, namely the arrangements necessary for securing the inviolable observance of the laws of national unity and

strength. Spinoza holds that it is foolish to constitute as guardians of the laws, those who are most tempted to break them. It is contrary to human nature to enforce rigorously, conditions of conduct whose non-observance seems to be for the immediate advantage of oneself and the members of one's own class. If those whose duty it is to maintain a people's fundamental institutions have not more to lose, than to gain, by neglecting their duty, there is no real security for the proper fulfilment of this vital function. "Laws by themselves alone are weak, and easily broken, when those whose duty it is to put them in force are the same persons who are most liable to break them, who alone have to take warning from the punishment inflicted, and to call their colleagues to account with a view to restrain their own passions by the fear of the same punishment. No arrangement more sure to defeat its own end could be conceived" (*Tract. Pol.*, 8, 19).

On the other hand, the laws will be kept in force, and vigorously maintained, if it be made not only the duty, but also the interest, of a certain body of men to defend their integrity. Both in a monarchical, and in an aristocratic State, Spinoza makes provision for this, and entrusts this work to men who can gain no higher honour or advantage than that which accrues to them from the maintenance of the national forms of life. The necessity for this he shows in this way. (See *Tract. Pol.*, Ch. 10.)

First of all, we must take account of the fact which Machiavelli has already pointed out, that in a State, as in the human body, there daily appears something which needs every now and then to be remedied. Hence, if the State is to remain secure, there must be some device or arrangement for purging it of unhealthy accretions, and restoring it to harmony with its own fundamental principles. For, should this not occur within the proper time, its health would be so undermined that death alone would cure its ills. Machiavelli had already suggested that a fit remedy for the ailments from which States are apt to suffer is, in some cases, provided by a nation's good fortune, while in others, it is the result of human prudence and foresight, expressed either in a provision made for this end by a system of well-devised

law, or in the wisdom of some man distinguished for his virtue.

Spinoza agrees with Machiavelli as to the importance of providing a remedy for the State's periodical sicknesses, seeing that, as its rulers are only men and not omniscient, some causes of ill-health will always be present. It is a dictate of Reason that we should make provision for dealing effectively with evils which the limitation of our wisdom makes us incapable of preventing. "For, where no provision is made for this contingency, a State will owe whatever permanence it enjoys, not to any virtue in itself, but solely to its good fortune. While if a proper remedy for this evil is applied, the fall of the State will not come about from any defect in itself, but only from some inevitable destiny."

The remedy for this evil which has found most favour, has been the appointment of a Dictator every five years to hold office for a month or two. Such a Dictator was invested with full authority to enquire into, and pass judgment on, the conduct of every officer of State, and with full power to restore the State to its original constitution. This remedy, however, Spinoza considers a very perilous one. First of all, because it is no less unconstitutional than the condition it is meant to cure. It is itself another accretion, and not a "remedy in harmony with the nature of the State, and derived from the fundamental principles of the State. And, in trying to steer clear of Charybdis, we must beware of making shipwreck on Scylla." A Dictatorship is necessarily, for the time being, not a re-establishment of the constitution, but an abrogation of it altogether; and no constitution can provide for its own extinction, even if such extinction is meant to be only temporary. Thus a Dictatorship is bad, because it is not a constitutional remedy, and cannot be made one. Further, it gives both the bad and the good citizens in the State equal reason for fear, since the Dictator, having absolute power, may do as he likes, and punish the virtuous for their good deeds no less than the bad for their evil deeds. No one can be sure of being justly judged. And such a condition of things, in which the good have no greater security from fear and punishment

than the bad, is most dangerous to the peace and stability of any State. Lastly, the appointment of a Dictator always gives rise to the greatest contention and dispeace, whether he be appointed regularly at a fixed period, or only as an emergency arises. In the former case, every ambitious man will strain every nerve to gain this supreme honour ; and thus the State will be vexed in the interval between one Dictatorship and another with endless strife, jealousy, and confusion. While in the latter case, the matter being left quite indefinite will readily be lost sight of altogether, and the illness and prostration of the patient will be allowed to attain such a height that no remedy will then be possible.

Spinoza tries to secure, by safer means, the same end as the appointment of a Dictator was meant to serve. The conditions which such a safer remedy ought to fulfil are these. "The Dictatorial power should be characterised by permanence and stability, and it should be of such a nature that it cannot, consistently with maintaining the constitution of the State, pass into the hands of one man, else it will not only be itself very insecure, but it will also make the welfare and maintenance of the Republic equally uncertain. But, if it is possible, while preserving the constitution of the State, to make the Dictatorial authority permanent, and to render it a terror to the evil disposed alone, vices will never be able to grow to such a height as would make their extirpation, or correction, impossible." That is to say, the desiderata in this matter are, that the power of correcting abuses should be always in operation, not an extraordinary and occasional exercise of authority ; that it should be an integral and essential part of the national constitution, not a temporary abolition of it in favour of uncontrolled sovereignty ; that it should not be allowed to fall into the hands of a single individual, who might prove the saviour of his country, but might equally prove its destruction ; and that it should be so ordered as to be not only a terror to evil-doers, but "a praise to them that do well."

These conditions, which the expedient of a Dictatorship failed to realise, can, Spinoza believes, be fulfilled by a wise arrangement of the offices of State. For, by appointing a

special body of men, a Council of Syndics, for the sole end of seeing that the constitutional laws of the nation are not violated, by bestowing certain privileges upon them, and imposing certain conditions, the desirable ends just mentioned will be secured. "That we may realise all these conditions the Council of Syndics should be made subordinate to the Supreme Council. This will make it possible for the authority of the Dictator to be always in operation, and it will also secure that this authority shall never fall into the hands of any one individual, but shall be exercised only by a 'civil person,' or organised body, the members of which are too numerous to make it feasible for them to divide the sovereignty amongst them, or to combine in any wickedness. They should also be made ineligible for election to any other office of State; they should have nothing to do with paying the soldiers; and lastly, they should have reached the age when men prefer the actual and the safe to the new and perilous. In this way the State will have nothing to fear from them, and they can be, and will actually be, a terror, not to the good, but only to the bad. For their very incapacity for committing crimes, gives them all the more power to restrain the wickedness of others. And, to say nothing of the fact that this Council being always in existence will be able to nip evil in the bud, its members are also sufficiently numerous to venture to arraign, and punish any man, however powerful. Nor need they fear his ill-will, especially as the voting is to be by ballot, and the verdict is to be pronounced in the name of the whole Council."

This constitutional arrangement Spinoza compares with that of the Tribune among the Romans. And he points out that while it is true that the Tribunes were always part of the political order, yet they had very little real power, and the power which they did exercise, was not a normal and essential function in the body politic, but a force making for discord and class jealousy. They never became an integral and necessary factor in the real government and control of the people and the rulers, but exercised, partly on sufferance, and partly by the opportunity which the oppression of the people by the Patricians gave them, an intermittent and

precarious authority. "The Tribunes at Rome were too weak to cope with the power of a Scipio. Also, what they considered for the advantage of the people had to be submitted to the Senate; and the Senate could often defeat them, by making the favour of the people incline to the man from whom the Senators had least to fear. Moreover any authority the Tribunes had against the Patricians depended wholly on the good-will of the people; and so whenever they called the people together to gain their support, they seemed to be rather stirring up a rebellion, than convoking a Council. But such inconveniences as these could not arise in a State constituted in the way we have described."

Spinoza indeed recognises that laws, however well made and well maintained, will not restrain and control everyone. For laws can work only through the common hopes and fears of men, and there are always a few men who are raised above, or have fallen below, the hope and the fear which the State can bring to bear upon them. But this does not affect the value and efficacy of the law as a general rule of conduct. "For the laws of the State are not invalid, because a fool, or a madman, cannot, by any of its punishments or rewards, be induced to obey its orders; nor because a man here and there, who is a religious fanatic, looks upon the laws of the State as the worst of evils. The laws are none the less effective; seeing that most of the citizens are controlled by them, and that those who are raised above fear and hope, and are in that way a law unto themselves, are the enemies of the State, whom it may lawfully render harmless" (*Tract. Pol.*, 3, 8). The immanent and essential function of the laws of the State in the activities and endeavours of both rulers and subjects, is proved by the fact that no one commits any evil deed without trying to cover it with an appearance of lawfulness. This is the tribute which even a lawbreaker is forced to pay, from the very conditions of his existence. "Those who exercise the sovereignty of the State, or have the administration of its affairs, always try to cloak whatever wickedness they are guilty of, with a show of law, and seek to convince the people that it was done from the most honourable motives" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 17). "Although there

is no crime too execrable not to have been committed by some one, yet no one attempts to destroy the laws, even to excuse his own evil deeds; nor does any one seek to introduce anything immoral as an eternal and salutary principle of conduct. For men have been so constituted, that every one (whether he be a king or a subject), when he has done anything base, tries so to embellish his deed that men may believe his action to be in no wise contrary to justice and propriety" (*Ibid.*, Ch. 12). That is to say, law as the necessary condition, and permanent bond, of social union, has become so much a part of the spiritual consciousness of all men, that no one, however bad he be, can either conceive, or will, a state of life in which it would not be an essential element. The sense of the priceless value of settled conditions of social life and mutual assistance, is indissolubly wedded in every man within a civilised community with the sense of a general law, or body of laws, which makes possible and maintains such permanent bonds of union.

Thus the security of the State may, with the utmost confidence, be entrusted to the inter-dependent political order which a well devised constitution involves. For, under such conditions, each organ of the common life will recognise itself as part of a whole, and find its power and prosperity in doing its own proper work, and its impotence if it attempts to usurp any other function. And, if the whole be well organised, each organ will have so much to do, and so much that it alone can do, that the time and attention needed for interfering with the work of the other organs will be wanting to it. Each will be inspired by that constitution which is the spirit, or the common mind, of the nation; and each will be loyal to that which makes the highest and most complete exercise of its function possible to it. In this way, unity and force of action will be secured, without the dangers which the uncontrolled rule of one man inevitably brings.

Spinoza does not, indeed, believe that this, or any other, organisation of the State will furnish an unfailing remedy against all the ills that may befall a people. Many mischances may come to it, both from the physical world, and from the superior strength, organisation, or enterprise of

another nation, which such a constitution as this could not avert. But these are the inevitable risks to which all existence in the world is subject. No human wisdom can succeed in altogether eliminating, or providing against, such contingencies. But what can be done is none the less of the highest importance, namely, that each nation should learn how to make the most of its own resources, and provide with the best knowledge and forethought against those ills that are preventible. This it can do, by so ordering its civil relations, that men will spend themselves in, and for, it with the most strenuous good-will, energy, and intelligence, feeling that within its pale they are safe, strong, happy, and free, as they could be under no other form of government. And, if all the State's ills will not in this way be entirely averted, those which are most frequent and most harmful will be. For the worst, and the most common, dangers to the State arise from its own internal discords and jealousies. The rulers and the subjects differ as to their respective rights and obligations, the citizens are separated from one another by class-feeling and opposing interests, and the unity of all which is the strength of each is sacrificed to party advantage and the momentary gratification of some passion or partial conception of human welfare. The causes from which these intestine divisions arise can be eliminated by a wise ordering of the conditions of human endeavour, and the excellence of a constitution is precisely in proportion to the measure in which it "has taken away the causes of discord" between ruler and subject, and between fellow-subjects themselves, and rendered it impossible for any one to gain for himself any of the objects or ends most attractive to him, except by contributing to the unfolding of that common welfare which is the condition of his own. In this way, the State will no longer be made dependent on the fidelity of any individual, and its stability will be such that every man will be forced—forced, that is to say, through his own judgment of what will, under those circumstances, be most for his interest—to act loyally by it, and to help in maintaining it; and he who is thus forced to do what is for his real welfare, will gradually learn to will that welfare for its

own sake. For, while the State should be so constituted as to be dependent for its continuance on no individual's fidelity, its highest end and purpose is, so to master its citizens' souls, or to become so essential a part of their lives, that they can no longer conceive that disloyalty is even possible for them. It is from this point of view that Spinoza treats the difficulty, that even a good political constitution does not afford a perfect guarantee for a nation's independence and prosperity.

"The objection may still be urged, that even if the State constitution just described has behind it, not only Reason, but also public opinion, it will yet be liable to be sometimes overturned. For there is no human emotion which is not sometimes overcome by a stronger and opposite emotion. The fear of death, for example, is frequently mastered by the desire for another man's property. Similarly, we see that men who flee in abject terror from the enemy cannot be restrained by the fear of any other thing ; for they will cast themselves into rivers, or rush headlong through fire, to escape the enemy's sword. And thus, it may be argued, even though the State has been well ordered, and enjoys the best possible system of law, yet in the State's utmost need, when all, as is commonly the case, are paralysed with fear, all consideration for the future, and for the sanctity of the laws, will disappear. What present apprehension prompts will meet with universal approval. The name of the nation's victorious general will rise to every one's lips, they will straightway free him from all law, and even—establishing a most unfortunate precedent—make him permanent sovereign. In this way, the welfare of the whole commonwealth will be entrusted entirely to one man's fidelity, a condition of things which unquestionably proved the cause of the destruction of the Roman empire.

"To this argument my reply would be, firstly, that in a rightly constituted State, such extreme terror will not arise, except from a well founded cause ; and hence, if it do arise, human forethought could not have done anything else to prevent either it or the confusion which arises from it. Secondly, it is to be noted that in such a State as we have portrayed, there could not be any one man so eminently distinguished for virtue that his name would rise to every one's lips. Of necessity he would have a number of rivals, and these would have many supporters. Hence although terror might arise, and produce some confusion, even in such a State, yet no one will be able to circumvent the laws, nor will it be possible for any one to be appointed, contrary to the constitution, to a military despotism over the State. At least if this were to happen it would straightway produce a contention between his supporters and those who favour other aspirants. And to settle this dispute it would be necessary to appeal to those established constitutional provisions to

which all had given their assent, and to deal with the problem according to the laws actually in force" (*Tract. Pol.*, 10, 10).

Another principle on which Spinoza insists is, that the respective functions of ruler and subject should be well defined and well enforced. It is at once the duty and the right of the ruler to be "the mind of the State," to understand the condition, the wants, the hopes, and the fears of his subjects. All his functions are, in fact, simply forms of this one function—to think, plan, and anticipate for those who have put the common welfare under his care to the end that it may be better conceived and realised for them. "The King should be regarded as the mind of the State (*mens civitatis*), and the supreme Council as the external senses of the Mind, or as the Body of the State through which the mind apprehends the condition of the State, and through which the Mind executes what is, in its judgment, best for the community" (*Tract. Pol.*, 6, 19). The King is thus regarded when "the fundamental laws of the State are looked upon as his eternal decrees," exalted above even the inconstancy of his own will, and the misjudgment, and partiality of his own intelligence; for, if everything were at his entire discretion, his crown would pass from him whenever he failed to act with the highest wisdom and steadfastness. But, under such a more stable constitution, his will is always law, inasmuch as the law is always treated as his deliberate will or constant mind.

If, then, the ruler's supremacy means simply the supremacy of a governing intelligence, it is necessary to secure, as far as any human arrangement can, that those who have the burden of rule shall also have the capacity, and the conditions, necessary for really being "the mind of the State." One arrangement which will contribute to this result will be, to fix the qualification, age, and tenure of office of the members of the Supreme Council in such a way, that this body will always have a considerable number of members well fitted by their experience, skill, wisdom, and virtue to deal with affairs of State. Even under a Monarchy the importance of this Council is very great. Its duty is to discuss thoroughly all matters of State policy, and then, if no unanimous decision

has been reached, to lay all the views that have obtained substantial support before the King, who is not to be at liberty to decree anything, except what agrees with one, or reconciles several, of these opinions. Such an exercise of the royal authority will be guaranteed, if the King can transact business, promulgate laws, and see to their enforcement, only in and through this Council, or a Committee of it. Thus he will be *forced* to know the condition of his people, and will not be able to plead ignorance of the problems which call for his attention, and for remedy. For it is to be the one duty of this Council to see that he shall not be ignorant of the necessities, and grievances, and discomforts of his people's lives. And there is little fear of this Council proving remiss in its duties, or being corrupted by royal favour to say only what the King will be pleased to hear, seeing that all its members are to be elected by what is practically a popular suffrage, that they hold office only for a short period, and that each year a fifth part of them go out of office, and cannot be re-elected till some years have again elapsed. In this way the supreme Council, or Parliament, is kept in constant touch with popular feeling, wants, grievances; and the King is entirely ensured against that false security which comes of not knowing, or being blind to, or being kept in ignorance of, the condition and sentiments of his people. Parliament cannot make laws without his approval and sanction; and he cannot make laws except along lines which it has, from a closer acquaintance with the citizens' wants, and wishes, already defined. This mutual constraint and restraint Spinoza holds to be good for both parties. It makes each face the real problems and duties for which it was appointed; and it helps to prevent that 'legislation from above' which is, perhaps, worse than no legislation at all, as well as to secure that legislation from within, which is simply human reason setting itself to know the real nature of men's lives and needs, and to apply appropriate remedies for the waste of energy and heart which is always going on. Thus it is the Monarch's one duty to know what the safety and well-being of his people demands, and to decree the measures which will further this.

It is because "the King cannot of himself know what is for the welfare of the State, that he must have a body of Councillors" associated with him. "It is the King's right to choose one of the views which was well supported in the supreme Council, but not to make any law or pass any judgment contrary to the mind of the whole Council." "It is the chief duty of this Council, or Parliament, to guard the fundamental laws of the realm, and to advise as to the administration of its affairs, in order that the King may know what decisions and enactments the public interest demands. But the King shall not be at liberty to settle regarding any question without first hearing what view the Council takes regarding it" (*Tract. Pol.*, 6, 17). "It is universally acknowledged that it is the duty of the sovereign in the commonwealth always to know its state and condition, to watch over the common welfare of all the citizens, and to carry out whatever is for the advantage of the greater number. Hence it is necessary for the Monarch to have Councillors, seeing that one man is not able by himself to examine into everything, both because his mind cannot be at all times equally active and well-fitted for deliberation, and also because illness, old age, and other causes frequently altogether prevent him from devoting himself to public business. The duty of this Council, therefore, is to have a thorough knowledge of the real state of the nation's affairs, to assist the King with advice, and not infrequently to fill his place. Thus there will be some security for the Commonwealth, or State, enjoying that unity and permanence which the rule of one and the same mind ensures" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 3). Thus while "it is the duty of the sovereign alone to determine what the welfare of the whole people and the security of the State require, and also to command whatever he judges necessary for this end"; it is no less the duty of every one, and especially of the organised will of a popularly-elected Parliament, to see that he is defended against all self-deception, inadequate knowledge, partial judgment, and temporary weakness of thought or will. For in this way his 'real will,' or eternal decrees, will be his defence against the fallibility and inconstancy of his own nature, and his

kingdom and kingship will be safe and secure to him as it could not be under any other conditions. A Council of wise and experienced men, who know intimately the condition, nature, temper, grievances, and discomforts of the people, is not a restraint upon the monarch's real freedom, but an enlargement of it, and a firmer guarantee for it. If the monarch does not know what ails his subjects, or does not see what might, and should, be done to cure their ailments, he will be like a man in the dark who is allowed freely to go to his doom without any one venturing to tell him the real nature of his own act. But if he is protected by wise constitutional provisions against the very possibility of not knowing the real temper, wants, and wishes of his subjects, and also against being left to the scanty wisdom, resource, and energy which any single mind can have at its disposal, his real freedom, power, and sovereignty are indefinitely extended. For sovereignty is always exactly in proportion to the wisdom which directs it. And the ruler who can rely upon the knowledge, experience, prudence, and insight of the ablest men in the State, will readily recognise how powerful and secure this constitutional provision makes his throne, and how weak and defenceless and easily supplanted he would be if he had no such larger stock of wisdom to fall back upon. If men once realise that it is not the sovereign who makes the laws, but the laws which make the sovereign, they will be prepared to admit the deeper truth, that both law and sovereignty exist only in virtue of, and in proportion as they incarnate, those better conditions of existence and those more satisfying objects of desire which are the content of, and the security for, all civil obedience and loyalty. So strongly does Spinoza hold that the unity and permanence of a nation depend on the capacity and wisdom of those who are responsible for governing it, that he maintains that where, as in an Aristocratic State, the supreme Council is also the sovereign, any member of it who becomes bankrupt, or shows himself incompetent to manage his own affairs, should be turned out of office. For while if any member of the ruling class "have lost his property by a misfortune which could not have been avoided, and can prove

this clearly, he shall have his wealth restored to him out of the public purse. Yet if, on the other hand, it be proved that he has wasted his goods by riotous living, by extravagance, by gambling, and by low living, or if it be shown simply that he owes more than he can pay, he shall be deprived of his rank, and counted unworthy of any honour or office. For he who cannot govern himself, and his own private affairs, will be much more incapable of directing the affairs of a nation" (*Tract. Pol.*, 8, 47).

The main forms which the sovereign's activity should take, that is to say, the main duties for the sake of which he is appointed to, and maintained in, office are thus described :

"The sovereign alone is invested with authority to enact laws, to interpret them in each particular case should any dispute arise about their meaning, to determine whether any action was in harmony with, or contrary to, the law, and lastly to make war, or to determine and offer conditions of peace, or to accept those offered by others."

"As all these ends, as well as the means required for realising them, are matters which concern the whole body politic, that is the commonwealth, it follows that the commonwealth depends on his direction alone who exercises the sovereign power within it. And it is a necessary consequence of this, that the sovereign alone has the right and authority to pass judgment on every man's actions, to exact an account of every man's doings, to impose appropriate punishment on offenders, and to settle disputes among the citizens as to their respective rights, either directly or else by appointing competent lawyers to act in his name and stead. Moreover, the sovereign alone has the right to employ, and to order, all the means required for successful prosecution of war, and for the maintenance of peace, namely, the right of building and fortifying cities, the right to enlist soldiers, to appoint to military office, to command what he wishes done, to send, and to receive, ambassadors on an embassy of peace, and lastly to levy whatever taxes are necessary to defray the expenditure thus incurred" (*Tract. Pol.*, 4, 1-2). Another duty which Spinoza regards as a function of the sovereign is the care of the poor. For "any man's resources are much too limited to make it possible for him to bring help to every person who requires aid. Neither can one man be on a footing of friendly helpfulness with every one. Thus the care of the poor is a duty incumbent upon the whole society, and one which concerns only the common well-being" (*Ethics*, Part 4, Append., § 16).

The duties, or rights, of the subjects in a State follow necessarily from those of the sovereign. They are, in fact,

the obverse or correlative of these. If the ruler has a right, and a duty, to command certain things, the subject necessarily has a right, and a duty, to obey these commands. And if he refuse to fulfil them, or if he act in opposition to them, he may lawfully be punished. "It is incumbent on the sovereign to attend to the matters just mentioned; and the subjects are bound to execute his orders, and not to recognise as law anything save that which the sovereign declares to be law." "No private citizen has any right to judge whether the terms of the original compact are observed or not." "We cannot even conceive it as a possible condition of existence, that each man be at liberty to interpret for himself the decrees or laws of the State. For, if each enjoyed this liberty, he would be thereby constituted judge of his own conduct; and he might then, with little difficulty, excuse, or gloss over, his ill deeds with a specious show of law, and order his life in any way he pleased" (*Tract. Pol.*, 3, 4).

Hence, a subject who takes upon himself, without the sanction and authority of the sovereign, any of the functions which belong to rule is rightly treated as an enemy of the State, whether his motive, in so acting, be a laudable or a base one. For "a man's loyalty to the State, like a man's religious faith, can be known only from his works," and, as we have already seen, the State, or the law, is not a fit instrument for estimating the goodness of men's motives or purposes, but only for judging of the conformity or the non-conformity of their actions with a certain line or rule of conduct.

"As then the right and authority to transact the business of the State, or to appoint ministers for this purpose, is vested in the sovereign alone, it follows that he is aiming at sovereign power who, being only a subject, has of his own motion, and without the cognisance of the supreme Council, intermeddled with any public business, even although he honestly believed that what he wished to bring about would be highly advantageous to the State" (*Tract. Pol.*, 4, 3).

"A subject is said to be guilty of high treason, if he has in any way tried to arrogate to himself the right and authority of the sovereign, or to transfer that right to another. I say 'has tried,' for if men were not condemned until after the deed was done, the State would generally find

that the punishment had been too long deferred, since the right and authority would be already seized or transferred. Moreover, I make my statement—'who in any way whatever tries to seize upon the right and authority of the sovereign'—without any qualification; for I hold that it makes no difference whether it is harm or advantage, that would then assuredly come to the State as a whole. Whatever be the motive from which the attempt was made, the man is guilty of treason, and is rightly and lawfully punished.

"Every one admits that this is perfectly just in war. That is to say, if any one leaves his appointed place, and attacks the enemy without the general's orders, even though he has by his own skill carried the attempt to a successful issue and defeated the enemy, yet is he lawfully and justly condemned to death, for having broken his oath, and violated the authority of his commanding-officer. But, though all admit this to be necessary in an army, they do not see so clearly that it applies equally to the citizens of the State. The same principle, however, holds good in both cases. For, as the State depends for its preservation and guidance solely on the wisdom and prudence of the sovereign, and as all have bestowed this authority on him alone, if any one has, simply at his own discretion, and without authority from the supreme Council, intermeddled in any business of State, he has violated the right of the sovereign, and committed treason; and he is rightly condemned by law, even though the State was sure to derive benefit from his action" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16).

Spinoza holds that the duty of obedience is always binding upon the subjects, even if the sovereign be a tyrant. The only 'saving clause' in this absolute obligation is that which is furnished by the very conditions of obedience and of sovereignty themselves, namely, that the ruler has no right, or authority, to demand or expect obedience, if he lose the power to enforce it. And the power to enforce it, or to give his commands 'the force of law,' is a power over and in men's souls, that is to say, a power to rule them through their own desire for, and endeavour after, a better life, or a better condition of life. Thus every one is bound to obey "even a tyrant, except he to whom God has given special power." For simple disobedience is no cure for tyranny. Only the power to set up a new and better order of life is a cure. This is the way in which God has ordained that bad government shall be cured, and it is the only way. He who has the capacity to conceive, and the resolution to realise a better order of civil life has the divine right to do so, while he who has allowed the power over men's minds to

slip from him, has already lost the divine right to rule them. For the right to rule means the capacity to rule. Hence, he who has the confidence that he is able to replace a tyranny by a better order of life has not only a right, but a sacred obligation, to make the attempt. But he has no right to complain if the titular sovereign treats him, when he does make the attempt, as an enemy of the State, and uses against him all the force and policy at his command. Nor has he any right to complain if, in the case of non-success, he is put to death as a public enemy—in spite of his good intention. For a State cannot recognise and give credit for good intentions. And non-success means that he *was* an enemy of public order and of settled political relations, and had not the divine power which alone would have justified his rebellion against the established order.

No doubt this appears rather hard on the would-be saviour of his country. But fuller consideration will make it appear less so. For this is the law of the State's existence. The State *must* treat such a man as its enemy, until he has established a more secure civil order, which can hold its own by a better divine right than the civil order which now exists. Were this otherwise, would-be saviours of their country would be so numerous that every man would walk in continual fear of his neighbour suddenly taking this high office upon him. The one thing which keeps us all from arrogating to ourselves the function of reconstituting society, in accordance with our own conception of justice and equity, is that we are not willing to take the risk of losing, by thus usurping the Sovereign's power, all else that we count dear. It is this heavy penalty which makes men who have not the means 'to finish their work' first 'sit down and count the cost'; and thus it saves society from almost all the well-meaning, but incompetent, attempts to transform it, which would otherwise prove the worst evil that could befall it. Of the tremendous penalty which failure brings the true patriot will be the last to complain; for he has already counted the cost, and knows both the greatness and worth of the prize and the inevitable consequence of failure. Hence, it is not cynicism but truth which hails the successful rebel as

the saviour of his country, and the unsuccessful as a traitor; for an unsuccessful rebellion is, to every citizen in the State, the dearest of all follies and the worst of all crimes, while a successful one may be cheap at any price. If men have been disquieted in vain, they owe no thanks to the fomenter of civil war, however good his intentions may have been; while if they have not only fought for, but won, better conditions of life and better security for progress, they can well afford to pay the price of their victory.

A third principle which Spinoza insists on as essential to the security of the State is that peace, rather than war, should be to the direct interest and advantage of every one in the community, whether he be a sovereign or a subject. In this way, every one will zealously strive to realise those ends for which the State was called into existence, namely the safety, security, happiness, and well-being of those who constitute it. Every one will choose war only for the sake of better conditions of peace, and never for its own sake.

There are various ways of attaining this result. The first, and the chief, way of doing so is to make it unconstitutional and impossible to employ mercenary soldiers, and—what is the complementary side of this principle—to make the citizens regard it as not only their duty, but also their highest privilege, to defend their country's laws and liberty. Spinoza learned from Machiavelli the supreme importance of this idea, and he is never weary of illustrating and enforcing it. Its value is that it both prevents the State being vexed by necessarily antagonistic interests, such as those of mercenary troops and of unwarlike citizens must be, and it also produces in the State as a whole a common feeling that the welfare of each is the welfare of all *alike* in peace and in war.

The two points, then, which have first to be proved are that mercenary troops are a very unsafe form of insurance both for the people of a State and for the sovereign; while a citizen-soldiery is an investment which yields the highest returns both to the ruler and to the subjects. To convince men of these truths, Spinoza appeals to any and every motive which influences their thought and their action.

Paid soldiers, he points out, are a heavy drain on the citizens' purses, while a citizen-soldiery is cheap. Further, mercenary troops will always get more honour and regard from the ruler than the common crowd of men who cannot fight. Again, a soldier is more of a free man than the man who cannot defend his own liberty. Also, where there are paid troops, war will be the main interest and excitement of life, and, if no war is actually in progress, one will be in contemplation, and thus the State will never be at peace. Then, too, not only is the expense required for constant war very great, but the people are, by the devastation which war necessarily causes, made the less able to afford it; while, on the contrary, the taxes which are required for maintaining peace are easily paid, just through the very advantages and prosperity which peace itself brings. These various aspects of his principle Spinoza works out in different connections as follows:

"As right is synonymous with power, if the citizens of a State are to remain their own masters and preserve their freedom, the army should consist of citizens, and of citizens alone. For an armed man is more his own master than an unarmed one, and citizens who give up their arms to any one, and commit to him the defence of their cities, are transferring to him entirely their right and authority, and putting everything at the mercy of his good faith. Another argument in favour of this course is to be found in that unwillingness to part with money which influences most men very strongly; for mercenary troops cannot be maintained without heavy expense, and the citizens will find it very burdensome to keep up an army which can do nothing but fight" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 17). "There can be no greater or nobler stimulus to victory in war than the love of liberty. But, if only part of the citizens be trained for military service, not only will it be necessary for them to receive a fixed wage, but besides the King will necessarily give them the preference over the other citizens. And this means that the King will give pre-eminence to men who know nothing but the arts of war, who are in time of peace corrupted through excessive ease and luxury, and who, because they have no independent means of their own, think of nothing but plunder, civil dissension, and war. Hence a monarchical State constituted in this way will really be simply in a condition of war; and only the soldiers will be in the enjoyment of liberty, while the rest of the citizens will be no better than their slaves" (*Ibid.*, 7, 22). "No wages should be paid to a citizen-soldiery, for the highest reward of their warfare is their own freedom." "This army of citizens shall receive no wage in time of peace, and in

time of war only those who depend for their living on their daily labour shall receive a subsistence wage. But the commanders and other officers are to receive no remuneration in time of war except the spoil of the enemy" (*Ibid.*, 6, 31).

"A King cannot himself keep all his subjects in fear of him. His power, as we have said, rests on the number of his soldiers, and especially on their valour and fidelity. And men remain loyal to one another so long as they are bound together by mutual need, whether this need be an honourable or a base one. This explains why kings are more in the habit of encouraging than of correcting their soldiers, and why they are more eager to pass over their faults than their virtues. It explains also why, in order to keep the best men out of power, they seek out the indolent and luxurious, pay them attention, shower wealth and favour upon them, shake hands with them, kiss them, and think nothing too servile, if only it serve to retain them in power. Now if the citizens are to have the pre-eminence in the good graces of the King, and to be their own masters in so far as the civil order or equity allows, it is essential that the army, and also the Councils, consist of citizens only. For it cannot be doubted that a people is reduced to the position of a conquered nation, and is exposing itself to never-ending war, as soon as it suffers foreign soldiers to fight for its defence. For war is their trade, and they have most influence and profit when discord and sedition are rife" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 12). "The army should consist of all the citizens without exception and of no others. Thus all should be obliged to serve in the ranks, and no one should be admitted to citizenship, until he has undergone military training and has undertaken to come up for drill at stated times every year" (*Ibid.*, 6, 10).

The only exception to this principle is in the case of an Aristocratic State. Here Spinoza recognises that the Patrician rulers, having the responsibility of ruling the State, and also the power to do so, cannot be absolutely forbidden to have resort to paid soldiers, and even to foreign levies, if the security of the State seems to them to require such a measure. But he still holds that, even in such a State, the rulers will act much more wisely and prudently for themselves as well as for their subjects if they rely chiefly on their own people.

"As an aristocratic State does not involve the equality of all, but only the equality of the Patricians, and especially, as the strength of the Patricians is greater than that of the common people, it is certain that the laws and fundamental constitutional principles of this State are not infringed though the army consists of others than subjects. It is of the utmost importance, however, that no one be admitted into the Patrician class who is not well acquainted with the art of war. But the view sometimes held that the citizens should be excluded from military service

altogether, is surely a foolish one. For, not to mention the fact that the pay of a citizen-soldier remains in the country, while that of a mercenary is lost to it, any regulation excluding the citizens from the army would weaken what is the chief element in the strength of a State. For there can be no doubt that those who are fighting for their altars and their homes, fight with singular steadfastness. Thus it is also clear that the view of those who hold that military generals, colonels, and captains should be chosen only from the Patrician class, is no less mistaken. For what valour in battle is to be expected of those who are cut off from all hope of glory and preferment. Yet, on the other hand, to make a law that it shall not be lawful for the Patricians to engage any foreign mercenaries, when the situation requires it, either for self-defence and the suppression of rebellion, or for any other reasons, would be not only indiscreet, but also repugnant to the supreme rights and authority of the Patricians" (*Tract. Pol.*, 8, 9).

Moreover a citizen-soldiery affords in all respects a safer and more reliable protection to the Monarch himself than any body of mercenaries can ever do. For as he must, being himself only a single man, rely on some military force, he can make his own people extend to him a devotion, vigilance, and affection such as no foreign troops will ever show. For mercenaries serve only the highest bidder, and thus keep their nominal employer in constant fear that some other will outbid him. There is no stronger tie in this case than the cash-nexus, and that is a very unsafe one. Moreover, if citizen-soldiers do claim certain freedoms, they do so as the inseparable partner of the Monarch in all crises and struggles, alike in peace and in war; and their freedoms arise from the sense of common interest which makes their familiarities one form in which their devotion to, and pride in, their country and their ruler reveals itself. But the freedoms claimed by foreign levies are not only much greater, but of a quite different nature. For there is here no sense of permanent and indissoluble union, but only the sense of temporary advantage. Hence the more turbulent and truculent mercenaries are, the more of reward and privilege can they extract by force and by fear from the Monarch they serve. Thus it might generally be said with truth that the Monarch who has to depend on mercenary troops is more afraid of them than they are of him, and is thus rather the servant, and

even the slave, of those who are supposed to serve him, than their lord or master. "Mercenary troops are quite as dangerous to the security of the absolute ruler as to the welfare of the people." "A Monarchical State in which there is no mercenary soldier will undoubtedly furnish ample assurance for the safety of the Monarch."

The chief merit of a citizen army is that it furnishes an almost complete security against all wars except those that are absolutely necessary in the interest of peace. And this is the best condition in which a State can be, namely prepared for war, but not willing to make it the main business of life either for all its people or for any class or body of men within its borders. For while "it is necessary in time of peace to fortify the cities and make them ready for war, and also to build ships, and prepare timeously the other weapons of war," yet "war is not to be waged except with a view to peace, and when the war is over the peace should be made firm and enduring." Hence although "regular troops, inured as they are to military discipline, and to the endurance of cold and fasting, are wont to despise a citizen army on the ground that they are far inferior to them in taking a place by assault and in fighting in the open field; yet no one of sound mind will assert that this is any misfortune for a commonwealth, or any cause of insecurity in it. On the contrary, every impartial judge of affairs will admit that the most stable of all States is that which is in a position only to defend its own possessions, but not to covet its neighbour's. Such a State will do its utmost in every way to avoid war and to maintain peace" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 28).

The same desirable result will be furthered, if the laws are so made that every one will have much to lose and little to gain through war. Mercenary troops are bad for a State for this reason, among others, that they are all-powerful in war, and find their greatest profit and advantage from war. But the State should be, and can be, so constituted that it is not the interest of any individual or class to promote strife. As one means of realising this end Spinoza recommends that in a monarchical State—in an aristocratic one he does not

apply the same remedy—"no citizen should have any private property in land, houses, or other real property. In this way, the risks of war will be made nearly equal for all; for if a law be passed, as one formerly was by the Athenians, forbidding any citizen to lend money on interest to any but fellow-citizens, all will, from love of gain, have commercial dealings with, or lend money to, one another. Thus the affairs of all will be mutually involved, or will require the same means for their prosperity. And consequently the majority of the Council will generally be of one mind regarding what the interests of the community and the arts of peace require. For, as we have said, every one defends the cause of another only in so far as he believes himself to be thereby making his own position more firm" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 8).

We can secure that the great influence of the supreme Council, or Parliament, under a Monarchy shall always be on the side of peace. For the majority of a Council, which is wisely constituted, "will never have any inclination for war, but will always have a great zeal for, and love of, peace. For not only will war always produce in their minds the fear of losing both their goods and their liberty, but, besides, it is they who will have to bear the fresh burdens which war imposes, and their children and relatives will have to exchange the care of their family affairs for military drill and active service. And they will be able to bring back nothing save unprofitable scars, seeing that the soldiers are to receive no pay" (*Ibid.*, 7, 7). In a similar way, in an aristocratic State ["the emoluments of the members of Senate should be of such a nature that peace will be more to their advantage than war. It will be well to pay them with the proceeds of a tax of one or two per cent. on all merchandise exported or imported. For if they are remunerated in this way there can be no doubt that they will do their utmost to maintain peace and shorten the duration of war. Nor should Senators be themselves exempted from the payment of this tax if any of them engage in commerce. For such immunity cannot, as will I believe be readily admitted, be conceded to them without inflicting a grave injury on commerce. . . . In this way the members of Senate will always have more to gain from peace than from war, and will therefore never, save under the strongest pressure of public necessity, counsel war" (*Tract. Pol.*, 8, 31).

The ruler or sovereign should also be guarded, by wise constitutional provisions, from rushing heedlessly or needlessly into war. We have already seen how the king should

be saved from his own ambition, pride, passion, and narrow judgment, and should have his "eternal decrees," which are the welfare and harmony of his people, maintained even against his own foolishness and momentary impulses. It is but another aspect of the same truth on which Spinoza insists when he says, that no man should be appointed ruler of a State whose virtues and capacities are only those of an army general, and not those of a statesman. This cuts two ways. It involves that a man should not be elected to govern a people if his strongest claim is that he has been a successful soldier, and it involves also that careful precautions should be taken against any victorious general gaining such power in the State that either he himself, or the people, will think him the proper man to rule in place of the reigning monarch. Each of these courses spells almost inevitable disaster either to the unity of the State, or to the liberties of its citizens, and probably to both. For it assumes an identity between the governing of an army and the governing of a nation, which human experience has not confirmed. The virtues of a free State are not the virtues of an army, and therefore the genius of a successful general is not the genius of a great statesman. That both qualities may now and then be found in the same individual is, so far as these qualities are concerned, an accidental coincidence, and one which occurs no oftener than any other coincidence. And as, in most cases, they do not coincide, a ruler with military genius is almost the worst curse that can come to a people. For he, like everyone else, will seek the most suitable conditions and sphere for exercising his talents, and showing how much he can do, and how well he can do it. But he has not the wisdom, insight, prudence, or capacity for developing the real activities which peace promotes, while he has the qualities which bring the highest glory and success in war. In such a case, a ruler will necessarily—because he also is human—seek in war what he cannot attain in and by peace. He will become the terror of other nations and the idol of his own. Yet he will be almost as great a curse to the nation which idolises him as to the nations which are oppressed by him. For he not only keeps his own State

continually at war, but he makes his people mistake the glory of a conquest which cannot last, for the glory of that true conquest over itself, and the promotion of its own real internal energies which alone makes it strong and stable.

"Though it often happens that a king is chosen with a view to war, kings being much more successful in their conduct of war, yet surely it is the height of folly that men should be willing to be slaves in time of peace, that they may have better fortune in time of war—if, indeed, peace can be supposed to exist at all in a political community which took account of nothing but war when it vested the sovereign power in one man. For a ruler elected on these grounds finds war the best stage on which he can display his capacities, and show how indispensable he is to all" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 5). "If we note the periods during which the Hebrew nation enjoyed complete repose from war, we will find a great difference between the time before the kings were raised to power and the time after the monarchy was established. For often under the earlier form of government 40, and once 80, years passed without any external or civil war disturbing the nation's tranquillity. But, after the kings obtained the sovereignty, wars were incessant and prolonged. For kings do not go to war to defend the State's peace and freedom, but to gain renown. Solomon alone was an exception, and he was so, because his chief excellence, namely his wisdom, could be better displayed and exercised in peace than in war. To this there is also to be added, that fatal passion in kings for power, which has so often made the path to the throne one of the utmost cruelty" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 18).

The other side of this, namely, that no successful soldier should find it possible to usurp civil sovereignty, or be encouraged to think that because he can direct an army he can therefore direct a State, is no less important. Spinoza makes careful regulations to prevent any man attaining such undisputed, and unique, eminence in war that he, or others, will think him the universal saviour of his country from all its troubles, internal as well as external. Even if one man have a genius for war beyond all others, he should not be made permanent commander-in-chief; for successful warfare is very dearly paid for, if it leads to a military despotism in civil life.

"It is for the security of the State, that is to say, both for the freedom of the people and the majesty of the king, that no military commander-in-chief be appointed for a longer period than one year, as such a commander has the whole State in his power." "No one who has the whole army, or any considerable part of it, under his command should,

save under the pressure of necessity, hold office for a longer period than a year at most. The importance of this regulation is manifest to any one acquainted with history, whether secular or sacred. Reason also proves most clearly why it should be so; for the might of the State is entirely trusted to him who is allowed time enough to acquire military renown, and exalt his name above that of the king, or to attach the army to himself by complaisance, acts of kindness, and those other arts by which leaders are wont to make others subservient to them and secure the government for themselves. Lastly, for the greater security of the whole State these military commanders should be chosen from the king's Councillors, or from those who have already filled this office, that is to say, from those who have reached the age which leads most men to prefer things that are old and safe to those that are new and hazardous" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 17).

All these careful and well-correlated regulations are designed to secure that the State will ever remain true to its proper vocation. That vocation, as we saw in an earlier chapter, is peace and not war. This is the end for which men live together, as well as the end for the promotion of which they have sometimes to go to war. For peace is not "absence of war," but a life of the highest human activities. That war should be an abnormal state, a necessary evil to be curtailed as much as possible, and that no class or individual should be condemned to the false and dangerous belief in and occupation with war, as if it were the main end of national life,—this is what Spinoza is most concerned to emphasise. A military monarch, or a body of soldiers or officers who are soldiers in peace no less than in war, is a sure source of mischief. For it is then their direct interest to foment strife, misunderstanding, civil and foreign war. On the other hand, a nation which aims wholly at the victories of peace, is not only true to the laws of its own health and prosperity, but also much better prepared, both financially and by a well-grounded belief in its own resource and internal cohesion, to encounter the losses and the risks of war when war is inevitable. Spinoza brings this out clearly in answer to the objection that burdens and taxes in time of peace may be no less onerous to the citizens than the losses of war. His answer amounts to this. The burdensome nature of a tax is not measured

by what people have to pay, but by their ability to pay it. If the taxes imposed are also the means which make the citizens much better able to pay them, the amount of them, as measured by pounds, shillings, and pence, matters nothing. The only bad taxes are those that are unremunerative in the form of better conditions of life, health, labour, energy, skill, and co-operative industry. A people can afford to pay any price for whatever really enriches and strengthens its common life; and heavy taxes may, under wise conditions, be the proof of a nation's prosperity, the invested capital which yields the highest of all returns in the happiness, the willing and strenuous endeavour, and the patriotic devotion of those to whom the State has given much that it may receive much from them.

“Against what we have said the objection may be brought, that if the Syndics and the members of Senate are to receive such large salaries, an Aristocratic State will be no less burdensome to the subjects than a Monarchical one. But, not to mention the fact that the Courts of Kings involve greater expenditure without contributing anything to the maintenance of peace, and also that peace can never be purchased at too high a price, there are several considerations to be kept in view. In the first place, all that, under a Monarchy, goes to one man or a few men is, under an Aristocracy, enjoyed by a large number. Secondly, kings and their ministers do not bear the public burdens along with their subjects; but, in an Aristocracy the case is different, for here the Patricians, being always chosen from the wealthy classes, furnish the chief part of the public revenue. Lastly, the burdensomeness of a Monarchical State arises not so much from the expenses of Royalty as from such a State's secret expenditure. For the taxes imposed upon the subjects in defence of their peace and freedom are not only endured, but are easily borne just through the very benefits which peace itself brings. What people, for example, ever had so many and such heavy taxes to pay as the Dutch? Yet, not only was the nation not thereby weakened, its resources were so abundant that all other nations envied its prosperity. Thus, if the taxes in a Monarchical State were imposed simply in the interests of peace, they would not press heavily upon the citizens. It is, as I have said, the secret expenses of a government of this kind which make the subjects sink under the burden of it. That is to say, it is because the peculiar excellence of Kings finds a better field for its exercise in war than in peace, and because those who wish to reign alone, need to use their utmost endeavour to keep their subjects bare of resources, that a Monarchy is commonly a heavy burden upon the people” (*Tract. Pol.*, 8, 31).

There are, indeed, certain dangers to which even a state of peace exposes its citizens. The people may become effeminate, luxurious, indolent ; they may lose the vigour of a war-like nation, and not maintain the vigour of a life of peace and progress. But for these "vices of peace" a good system of law, as we saw in Ch. 22, will furnish a cure or a preventive. Men become indolent and effeminate only if they have no objects of desire and interest set before them to call out their energies ; they become luxurious only when the path of honour and public office is closed to them, and only the path to wealth is left open. The vices of peace cannot be directly forbidden or prevented, but they can be indirectly prevented in a highly effective way by giving men other and better objects of hope and ambition, which will bring to themselves and to the whole State a truer and deeper satisfaction.

It is the same principle which should govern the dealings of a victorious nation with a conquered one. "When the war is finished martial law should end, since war should always lead to peace." Hence sharp, drastic, and even apparently ruthless measures are far better for both parties, if thereafter settled security and peace can be counted on to prevail, and each nation can again be free to resume the independent life which is its native air. This is an idea which Machiavelli had already suggested, and Spinoza fully adopts it. If a nation has once gone to war and defeated the enemy, it should make another such difference with it for ever impossible. It may do this in two ways. It may accomplish it by giving such generous and beneficial conditions of, and security for, peace, that the defeated nation will necessarily be won over to be the constant ally, friend, and helper of its quondam conqueror, and will find its own greatest prosperity in and through this fusion of interests. Or, if this kind of settlement is for any reason out of the question as a permanent solution, then the opposite course should be followed. The cities of the defeated enemy should be either destroyed altogether or occupied by self-governing colonies sent from the conquering nation, and the original inhabitants should be planted elsewhere or scattered in different places. If the first of these settlements—the security furnished by permanent fusion of

interests—is impossible, then the second is true kindness to the conquered as well as true safety for the conquerors. For the only other alternative is an indefinitely-prolonged military occupation which is equally bad for both parties. It treats a state of peace as if it were a state of war; it makes those who might be the victor's best friends into its bitterest and most dangerous enemies; and it produces in the dominant nation a pride of race, a contempt for the defeated people it has to rule, an intolerance and an oppression which are the sure prelude to its own fall. The virtues and excellences of peace will not flourish in either State under such conditions. Better far to make war bitter, sharp, destructive, and decisive, and then let it end. In this way each nation will then be free to resume its real existence, and to take up its own task in life. Each will take it up under altered conditions no doubt, but this is inevitable. And the only conditions that are really *bad* for a people are insecure, unsettled, ill-defined, and unstable conditions of existence, which make it neither a law to itself nor an inseparable part of another which is a law to itself. War and martial law should be surgical, not medical, still less should they be a nation's daily food.

"Cities captured in war, and those recently added to the State, are either to be treated as the State's allies and won over by the more enduring conquest of kindness, or else Colonies enjoying State rights should be sent thither, and the nation be either located elsewhere or be quite dispersed" (*Tract. Pol.*, 9, 13). "War is not to be carried on except with a view to peace; so that, when hostilities come to an end, military rule should also cease. Thus when cities have been captured by right of war, and the enemy has been defeated, the terms of peace should be of such a nature that the captured cities shall not require to be garrisoned. That is to say, either a treaty of peace should be made with the enemy, allowing them to resume possession of their cities on payment of a stipulated ransom, or—if this course would still leave a constant source of fear and apprehension to the conquering nation—the cities should be at once destroyed, and the inhabitants transported to other places" (*Tract. Pol.*, 6, 35).

Another constitutional principle which Spinoza regards as of great importance for the State's security is the maintenance of equality among the citizens. The two reasons for this are that inequality produces discord and discontent, and is apt to

be destructive of freedom ; and that there is so little difference between one citizen and another when each is compared with the whole State, that there is no real need for, or justice in, making them unequal. "That the citizens be, as far as possible, equal is a first necessity in the State." "Citizens are properly counted equals because the power of each is of no account when compared with the power of the whole State," though the case is quite different with the cities embraced within the State, as the influence and authority of these should be in proportion to their size (*Tract. Pol.*, 9, 4). "It is certain that if equality of citizens be once laid aside, liberty necessarily perishes ; and equality cannot be maintained if special honours are decreed by public law to any man of distinguished capacity" (*Ibid.*, 10, 8).

CHAPTER XXV.

THE AUTONOMY OF THE STATE.

IT is the aim of each State to be a law and an end to itself, as no individual man ever is, or can be. A State seeks to be independent, self-governing, self-controlled. It is like a man in the state of Nature in so far as it has, or should have, no humanly imposed law defining and enforcing its rights and its duties. Thus it may act as seems best to its own judgment. And in doing so, it is not subject to the disabilities from which an individual man in the same circumstances would suffer. For, while he soon finds the state of Nature, in which there is no rule or law of action except that furnished by his own will and judgment, unendurable, because of his own weakness, imperfect knowledge, and inconstant nature, and because of the aggression of other men, a State labours under none of these disadvantages. It is strong with the united powers and energies of a nation, it has at its disposal the wisdom, prudence, and sagacity of millions of men, it is steadfast and stable in virtue of a general body of laws which give security to the Monarch, and peace and liberty to the subjects. Thus it has none of those defects, which made settled and recognised conditions of life inevitable for the individual man, if he was to find any real happiness, peace, or prosperity in the world. On the contrary, the State is strong, self-sufficient, secure in its internal relations, able to command, and to employ for its continuance and its public welfare, the best powers to be found in any of its citizens. Thus the necessity for a Civil Order, and for moral laws to guide and control individuals in their relations

with one another, was a necessity of individual welfare only. It was a necessity for beings whose needs were many, whose weaknesses were great, whose passions were strong and self-destructive, and whose apprehension of their own and others' good was fitful, and, at the best, partial. By these defects of the individual nature Civil Society, and morality in the form of a law or a command, are conditioned and made necessary. That is to say, it is because men do not always know or will their own and others' best welfare, that the Civil Order which we call a State or organised Society is necessary ; and it is for the same reason that morality has to take the form of 'laws,' 'commands,' 'obligations,' 'duties,' which are imposed and enforced in spite of the varied and changing inclinations and judgments of the individuals who have to obey them. The duties of a civil order and the laws of morality are binding upon each individual man just because he can make the most of himself only in and through a settled community, and because there could be no settled community established or maintained except on the basis of civil right and obligation, moral law and duty. These are, in fact, the laws of spiritual health, vigour, vitality, or prosperity for every human being ; and they are universally binding only because every man does, in virtue of his nature as a thinking being, always want the most and the best he can get out of life.

But it has now to be noted that the very same principle which makes civil and moral rules absolutely binding and obligatory upon each individual man makes them *not* to be binding upon States or organised bodies of men. These civil and moral rules are the laws laid down by the State for 'persuading and enabling' each citizen to make the best of himself and his powers, that is, they are the laws of health, or of harmony, which govern the relations of citizens with one another when these citizens are most helpful and mutually serviceable. But they are not the laws of health, or of highest efficiency, for States, either in their relations with other States or in their relations with their own citizens.

This follows from the general principle which Spinoza has already developed and illustrated in other connections, namely, that the laws of a thing's existence, or the laws to

which it is subject, are not something imposed on, or other than, the nature of that thing, but just the nature of the thing. If the natures of two things are different in their ways of "affecting and being affected," this simply *means* that the laws by which they are regulated or determined are different. It is as impossible to have two objects different in their nature governed by the same laws as it is to have a circle with the properties of a triangle. A different thing necessarily has different laws of health, efficiency, and vigour.

Now the State is, as we have just seen, very different from a single man. Its powers are immensely greater, its causes of weakness, fear, inconstancy, imperfect knowledge, envy, hatred, malice are immensely less than his. The days of its years are, as compared with his, eternal. Its will is steadfast, its courage and resource almost unlimited. If, then, the State is 'the individual written large,' the writing is very large indeed, very firm and very lasting. But differences of nature so great and so deep are not possible without a difference between the laws of national unity, power, and efficiency, and the laws of individual well-being, for these laws are just a different name for, or a fuller understanding of, the nature, qualities, capacities, energies characteristic of the individual and the State respectively.

It is for this reason that Spinoza is so ready to recognise and adopt as the 'eternal truth' of the State the leading principle which Machiavelli had already unfolded in *The Prince*—that most perplexingly fascinating of all modern books—namely, that the civil rules and moral laws which are binding upon a citizen in private life are not binding upon a State in its dealings with other States or with its own citizens; and that rulers, therefore, are not bound in their public activities to pay regard to these rules and laws except in so far as the welfare of the State will be thereby furthered. Spinoza adopts this not as a matter of policy or public diplomacy, but as a truth which follows from the same principle as has given morality so strong and firm a hold on human life, and has made Justice and Love the ruling powers in the world. That is to say, he seeks to show that the law of self-preservation is not merely the supreme and

only law which the State can recognise as 'the rule by which its affairs should be conducted, but also that this is quite consistent with maintaining morality and religion as the supreme and absolute rule of every man's conduct in his relations with other men. If the State were an individual man, it would be as absolutely bound, if it wished to make the most of its life or to attain the highest efficiency, to act according to the dictates of morality as the individual now is. But as it is not an individual man, and is in many most important respects very unlike an individual, it cannot, if it wishes to attain its own highest efficiency or prosperity, act by those rules which are the condition of, or relative to, a very different nature's well-being, and it is therefore not bound to, and cannot (consistently with remaining a good State), act according to these rules.

[The State is not indeed bound by no laws. It is under 'law to God,' because it is a definite object in the world with a peculiar nature, and peculiar ways of determining and being determined. God has ordained that since it is a State, it will be well or ill with it as it fulfils certain conditions. But these conditions or laws are those of its own health, efficiency, energy, and internal unity. They are not the laws which make an individual human being most useful, happy, or efficient. Hence one State may deal with other nations on the most approved moral principles, and bring about its own ruin by doing so; while another may act in a way which, in the case of an individual man, would be most immoral, and yet not only take no harm, but become more strong and prosperous by such action. Spinoza holds that this need not, and does not, involve that there is any exception to the obligation of morality on every man. It only involves that God's law for the State's health and efficiency is not the moral law. The moral law is relative to, or binding only upon, individual men in their dealings with one another; and it is binding simply because they can and do make the most of their powers only on a moral basis. But for the same reason the moral law is not the law which governs the relations of one State with another. And God did not ordain that it should be, seeing that he has not made the security

and permanence of the State dependent on moral relations. Thus while the individual men in each State will be good or bad in character according to their conduct toward one another, one State cannot have, in relation to another State, a good or a bad character in the same sense.

A State acts *badly* only when it fails to realise the end for the sake of which its citizens called it into existence, namely, when it fails to furnish peaceful, stable, secure, and helpful conditions of existence for them. It then sins against God's law for it, or for its prosperity, and becomes weak, inefficient, and easily overthrown. But it does not sin against God's law for it, if it refuse to carry out a treaty once made with another State which it is no longer in the interest of its own citizens that it should observe. It would sin against the divine law of its existence, and be punished, if it did keep such a treaty. This is a point which has always aroused the keenest controversy. Is or is not diplomacy and government bound to act as a private man would in the same circumstances? Experience indeed seems to prove that we do, with some lurking sense of immorality perhaps, allow our diplomatists to 'lie abroad' that we may be able to tell the truth at home; and we do not believe that a statesman who cheats or overreaches another statesman, or that a general who tries to deceive the enemy as to his plan and purposes, is necessarily any worse in moral character than ourselves. We do not believe that the diplomatist who seeks to outwit, and get the better of, another diplomatist will be any more likely than another man to act dishonourably in all the private relations of his life. (Thus we do, as a matter of practice, already recognise that the dealings of one State with another are not regulated simply by moral rules.

What Spinoza contends for is that this follows naturally and necessarily from the nature of the case. Goodness has different meanings in different connections. When we speak of the relation of one man to another, goodness then means moral goodness. But when we speak of a man in relation to some particular object or end, it is not moral goodness that we indicate. A good plumber or baker or carpenter or secretary is not one who is kind and just, but one who knows

his trade or business, and can do efficiently what we want done. A 'good tailor' may be a very bad man in his relations with other men; while a kind and obliging man may be a very 'bad' maker of shoes. In the same way, a 'good' State or Statesman is one that knows the end we want realised, and realises it to our satisfaction and our welfare. And just as we always prefer to employ a 'good,' that is, an efficient, tradesman, so we prefer a 'good' State or Statesman, that is an efficient or capable one.

In what then does the 'goodness' of a State consist, if not in moral goodness? It consists in the State being, and remaining, a law and an end to itself (*sui juris*), autonomous, subject to no authority or power higher than its own. That is to say, its 'goodness' consists in being master in its own house, and in being able to keep any other power from exercising any authority there. This involves that the State, when it best fulfils its function, or most deserves to be called a State, will (1) have absolute control of its own resources, and (2) will be able to keep every other State from having any control or authority over them. The one of these is the internal, the other the external, aspect of its sovereignty and independence. We shall consider first the external aspect of sovereignty, or the relation of the State to other States, and then the internal aspect, that is, the relation of the State to its own citizens.

"A State," Spinoza says, "is autonomous (*sui juris*) when it is able to manage its own affairs, and to defend itself against oppression by another; while it is subject to the sway of another (*alterius juris*) when it fears the power of another State, or when another State prevents it from executing what it wishes to do, or lastly when it is dependent on the help of another State for its own preservation or development" (*Tract Pol.*, 3, 12). The ideal of every State is that it should be, and should remain, independent, or a law and an end to itself. "States are related to one another as individual men are in the state of Nature. Only there is this difference, that a State is able to guard itself against oppression by another State, while a man in the state of Nature cannot do this, handicapped as he is by daily need of sleep, often by illness, or exhaustion of mind, and at length

by old age, to say nothing of other evils to which he is always exposed, but against which a State can make itself secure" (*Ibid.*, § 11).

This difference between a single State and a single man, namely, that the one can make itself secure and self-sufficient, while the other cannot, explains many other distinctions between them. We saw that it was the insufficiency of the individual which made the civil order a necessity for him, and his obedience to it a duty. But it was only lawful and right for him to give up his power of acting as he pleased, because the law or the State did better for him than he could have done for himself; and if at any time this ceased to be the case, the duty and obligation of obedience at once ceased. The same principle applies to the State, but, under the different conditions, the result must be different. For there is no Civil Order above the State, bearing the same relation to the different States, and keeping them in subjection to it, as the Civil Order which we call the State bears to the individuals subject to it. There is no organised Society higher than the State itself, and no body of law enacted, maintained, and enforced by an authority supreme over separate States. And there is no such organised authority, because there is no real need for it. The reasons that made a Civil Order necessary for the welfare of the individual are not present in the State at all. It can defend itself against aggression, it can maintain a continuous existence, and it can secure itself against weakness, ignorance, envy, hatred, strife, and inconstancy. Hence the ground for a State's obedience to any supra-civil authority is wanting.

It is for this reason that each State not only will not, but cannot, recognise any law or authority higher than its own. It is by divine right the guardian of its own interests, the judge of what is best for it, the defender of its own liberty and independence, the avenger of any assault upon its integrity. This is not only its right but its duty, what it was created to accomplish, and it fails in one of its essential functions if it has regard to any law or judgment except its own. Thus "two States are by nature enemies or in a state of hostility." This does not involve that they must be at

war, or have any personal hatred toward one another. It means that neither can, without destroying itself, recognise any other law except its own law, or live except according to its own judgment of what is best for it. Each has to make its own welfare and security its first and last principle of action, for it has no right, or power, to hand over to another authority the sacred interests and well-being of its subjects on any consideration whatever. If it tries to do this, it straightway ceases to be a State at all, as its subjects will in that case owe and give it no allegiance.

Thus a nation's right to go to war for whatever seems to itself just and sufficient cause is one of the inalienable rights which no State can give up. It is one of the laws of its own integrity and existence. For there is no one who will care for, or maintain, its honour and place, if it does not do so itself. It may make war whenever it thinks the consequences or results to be gained by doing so will render it more secure, strong, or internally at one with itself. And in going to war it does not need the consent, approval, or warrant of any other State or authority. "If one State wills to wage war against another, and to proceed to extremities, it may lawfully do it, if it is an independent State; seeing that the waging of war requires only the will of one State." The only check upon the abuse of this power is that which comes from the inevitable calamities and uncertainties of war itself, the weakening of the nation's resources which it produces, and the diversion of its energies into unprofitable channels which a condition of war always gives rise to. But these are limits which war itself imposes from within. All war is not bad, though it is always very costly in blood, brain, heart, and purse. But the right to wage it, and to do so without getting the consent, or following the judgment, of any other State, is a right which no self-governing State can ever transfer to any other person or authority without abdicating its office and being unfaithful to its trust.

A condition of peace is, however, different in this respect, that it requires for its settlement and maintenance the will of at least two States. Any nation can begin a war, and thereby force others to appeal to the sword, but conditions

of peace can be made and maintained only by the common consent of all the parties to the struggle. But a further point, which will not be so readily admitted, is that conditions of peace, and even formal treaties, should, and can, last only so long as each of the parties to the agreement finds it for its interest to keep them, or thinks it to be so.

"A treaty will be valid only so long as the occasion of it, namely, the danger which had to be provided against or the advantage which had to be secured, continues in existence. . . . Experience also amply confirms this. For although different States make agreements not to do one another any injury; they still try, as far as possible, to prevent their allies increasing in power. And they do not put any faith in mere promises, but require to see clearly the end and advantage for the sake of which the other nation made the treaty. Otherwise they fear treachery, and not unnaturally. For who except a fool, ignorant of the rights of the sovereign in a State, is satisfied with mere promises from a ruler; seeing that a ruler has supreme power and the right to act as he pleases, and is bound to treat the safety and welfare of his own State as the supreme law of his conduct" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16). "A treaty is binding so long only as the reason for entering into it, namely, the fear of loss or the hope of gain, still continues. Should either of the States be set free from this fear or hope, it straightway recovers its independence, and the bond which united it with the other State is *ipso facto* dissolved. Thus each State retains unimpaired the right of putting an end to a treaty when it wills to do so. Nor can it be said that it acts with guile or perfidy in refusing to be bound by its agreement when the cause of the fear or the hope from which the agreement sprang, is no longer in existence. For this condition applies equally to both of the contracting parties, namely, that whichever State can first emancipate itself from fear is at once in possession of its independence, and free to make use of it as it pleases. And besides, no one makes any compact for the future except on the tacit assumption that the conditions will remain the same. Hence should the conditions change, the whole state of the case is likewise changed. For this reason each of the States, which have concluded a treaty, retains the right and authority to consult its own interest. Hence each seeks to be raised above fear and be a law to itself, and to prevent another power becoming stronger than itself. And if any State complains that its ally deceived it, the blame should be laid not on the bad faith of the State which put an end to the treaty, but entirely on its own foolishness in trusting its safety to another State, which is a law to itself, and whose supreme rule of conduct must be its own safety as a political community" (*Tract. Pol.*, 3, 14).

In other words, Spinoza argues that the relations of States are, and must be, of quite a different nature from those of individual men. Individuals can form compacts in perfect security, because there is a civil order which will make it the interest of each man to maintain and defend them. But States cannot do this, both because there is no authority except their own which guards their interests, and also because a State is untrue to itself if it makes, or attempts to keep, any promise or engagement which is not in the best interest of its citizens. The latter is the one supreme law of conduct on the observance of which its unity, strength, and permanence depend. Any other engagement it may make is always tacitly, if not expressly, conditional upon, and subordinate to, this one. A State which attempts to keep a treaty, which is not for the best welfare of its citizens, is violating the law of its own excellence as a State; while a State that trusts simply to a treaty, and becomes heedless of its own security, is renouncing its title to a place in the rank of independent nations. For all States are and must be in a condition of mutual "hostility," either potential or actual, until there exists in the world some organised force stronger, better established, enjoying more security for its own permanence, than any single State can.

As yet, there is no such force. The only approach to it is a federation of States. Such a federation can do much to diminish war, since the more States there are, which thus bind themselves by ties of mutual advantage, the less is war to be feared. For no one State can hope to gain much from war if its power is small in comparison with the forces that would be leagued against it. "The more States there are which make peace with one another, the less can any single State give the rest cause for apprehension. That is to say, the less power does any single State have to carry on war, and the more is it obliged to observe the conditions of peace, that is, the less is it simply a law to itself, and the more is it bound to accommodate itself to the common will of the other treaty powers." Yet even under these conditions each State must guard its own honour, look to the interest of its citizens, and refuse to be bound by agreements which would weaken or

destroy the allegiance of those who called it into being, and maintain it in vigorous life. This is the condition which makes and keeps it an independent State, while all definite relations with other States must be temporary, beginning and ending with the advantage or the immunity from fear and from danger out of which these relations sprang. The ideal of every State is to keep its citizens' lives and best interests absolutely secure. It cannot, without political folly, form any engagement which would put this, its chief duty and end, at the mercy of any other power or combination of powers. It ought to be master within its own domain and be able to exclude all foreign States from interfering in its affairs.

But the autonomy of the State has another side. It involves not only the independence of the State as against all other States, but also its independence as against any right or power vested in its citizens *qua* individuals. The rights of the citizens in any State should be only what that State has bestowed, granted, or decreed. Its power within its own borders and over its own resources should be as absolute and complete as its power is, or ought to be, against all intrusion upon its territory from without. Every right within the State should be a State right, whether it is vested in private citizens or in public officials. Any individual, corporation, society, trade or church which can claim and secure for itself rights or powers without first gaining for them, tacitly or expressly, the authority of the State is a testimony to the impotence or incapacity of the civil order. The power and right of the State, as embodied in the person of the ruler, to define and enforce rights and duties ought to be absolute. In the best State it will be so, and, in proportion as it is not so, the State will fail in its proper functions, and the lives of its citizens will bear all the penalty which its incapacity necessarily brings. For the greater the right or power of the sovereign, the happier will the subjects be, since this means that the State is "all the better able to maintain peace and freedom."

Thus not only does the State recognise no law above it, it ought not to recognise any. It is its duty as well as its right to claim this absolute power of control. "Civil laws depend

solely on the decree of the State, and the State is bound,—bound that is to say, if it is to remain independent,—to obey no one but itself, and not to treat anything as good or bad except that which it decrees to be good or bad for itself.” “If the State concedes to any one the right, and consequently the power, of living as he lists, it has thereby given up its own rights, and transferred them to the man to whom it has given such power.” Hence the State can do its citizens no injury or wrong; for it is itself the judge of what is wrong. Whatever is, in the judgment of the sovereign, necessary for the unity, peace, and integrity of the common life is lawful for him to command and a duty for the subjects to obey or to fulfil.

To this there is a very natural objection. Does it not involve that the State and the ruler are at liberty to deal with the citizens as they please, and that subjects have no right to disobey, or to resent any wrong done to them? No, it does not involve this. What it does involve is, that the more absolute the power of the State, that is, the more it penetrates into and interfuses with its citizens’ striving and endeavour, the more is it worthy of their highest devotion and the richer and more lasting are the blessings it confers upon them. We have already seen that the true absolute in sovereignty is, and can be, only a power in and through and over men’s souls; and that he alone enjoys undisputed supremacy who knows best, not only what people think they want, but what they really do want to make them happy and efficient. It follows directly from this that truly absolute power vested in a State, or placed at the command of the ruler, *means*, and can only mean, that that State is realising the best interests of its subjects, and that they in obeying are realising the true nature of freedom or liberty in co-operating with a view to securing the best objects. For we have already seen that the mutual harmony and peace of men is not an accident, nor possible in and through any and every object of desire or any and every kind of life, but only possible when, and in the measure in which, men are seeking the best objects, and those which really satisfy their souls. They *cannot* live in union, and be mutually helpful, except

as the true and main end of human existence is the soul of their civil and moral order.

Thus there are two sides to all State authority, namely, the power or right of the ruling member, and the obedience or duty of the subject member. But not only are these two inseparable, the one is wholly dependent on and proportionate to the other, and before we know where we are the one transforms itself into the other. For what is the power or right of the ruler except just the obedience which he gets from his subjects? And what is the obedience of the subjects except the direction and government of their lives by the ruler, or the man who sees better than they do themselves, what they really want to enable them to live peaceful, harmonious, and strenuous lives. Thus it is a matter of indifference whether we say that a rule that is absolute, in the true sense, is a sure proof of the happiness and prosperity of the people, or that in a State where the subjects are most happy, active, and enterprising the power of the State vested in the ruler is most absolute. Each of these statements expresses the same truth. But it may render their essential identity more clear if we consider each of them, and see how it does inevitably become transmuted into its 'other.'

To take the first, the power of the State or the sovereign. In the best State this will be absolute, while States will be more or less good, and worthy of their citizens' devotion, in proportion as they have a power more or less absolute. The best State will not only be able to defend and maintain its place among the nations, but will enjoy complete control over its citizens' lives and property, and will be able to get the most and the best results out of them. Does this mean that it can, and ought to, do whatever it likes, to deal with its citizens' lives and property as it pleases, without getting their will or consent? By no means. For we have already seen that no State has any real strength or stability except by making it the interest of its subjects to act in accordance with its laws, and by making them willing to do what it considers best for all and for each. Its power is the very opposite of absolute, if it does not know its own material and

trade better than to command what is contrary to the will of its subjects, or to govern them simply through force or through fear. The more a State acts in this way the weaker it is. But if it ought not to command what men are unwilling to do—ought not, because this is the weakest form of authority—it ought to know how to make them not only willing, but most eager, to do what the common welfare requires. This is *the* absolute power in a State, the power to enlist in its defence, and for its development, the highest hopes, the dearest interests, the most eager energy of all its citizens, so that they will not count either their lives or their property 'dear unto themselves' except as they can maintain that which gives worth and meaning to these. Every State attains this in some measure, but some do so much more completely than others, and are for this reason much more strong, united, and free. To put at the disposal of its citizens a life so rich and active, so full of objects of interest and ambition, that they 'cannot help' loving and expending their best powers of brain and heart for the State which creates and maintains it for them, is the true end, the right, power, and authority of all rule.

Of this rule in and through men's own souls there cannot be too much. The more of it there is the better, both for the ruler and for the subjects, because no State can will and achieve too much its subjects' welfare, and no subject prefers a weak, incapable, and foolish government to a wise, stable, and efficient one. The larger the place a government has in a people's real thoughts, wishes, feelings, interests, hopes, and desires, the more power does it have and the more are their interests protected and fostered; while the less place it has secured in their affections, the more helpless is it, and the more wretched and insecure is the condition of the people. Thus the more power, *i.e.* spiritual power, or power over men's spirits, the State really exercises, the richer, fuller, and freer is the life and energy of all the people; for the more of 'one mind' there is amongst them the more will their occupations, duties, rights, and the exercise of their energies 'dovetail' into one another, and be productive of mutual strength and lasting unity. While, where the nominal 'one

mind,' or government, is not truly the mind, or 'real will' of the people, and has no pervasive and immanent activity and power in their lives, the antagonism, the waste of energy, the blind seeking of partial and inconsistent objects of desire, the fear, the hate, the envy, and the strife which are inevitable where each man has to be a law to himself, will be "human nature's daily food."

Thus, not only is it no less in the interest of the subjects than in that of the ruler that the real power of the State should be absolute, it is the subjects who, by their willing, eager, and devoted obedience can alone make it absolute. If their wills, thoughts, feelings, hopes, and wishes are not mastered and kept, the State has no real efficiency, unity, right, or authority, while if they are, all things are possible to it on, and by the observance of, these conditions. Thus the ideal State, or sovereignty, is that which enjoys and maintains an absolute right and authority of this spiritual kind and in this spiritual way, that is, which enjoys an ascendancy over men's minds and hearts in virtue of a wise, strong, and resolute conceiving, willing, and realising of that good life which each citizen is seeking to attain.

Spinoza, however, is not content with this general statement. This spiritually absolute authority, which belongs to the State, must be really absolute; that is to say, nothing should remain outside of it, or not subject to its jurisdiction. Every right that can be claimed within a community must pass through this 'refining fire.' For every right in a State must be relative to other rights and duties in one system or order of life, and whatever will not consent to take, and to keep, the place appointed for it must be cast out as evil. If men are to live and labour in real harmony and security, there can be no dual jurisdiction or divided authority. The 'one mind' must have free course to achieve all that it can achieve in determining the relations which make common life and action possible and give it the highest efficiency. Thus "the sovereign in the State alone has the right of ordaining what is good, bad, just, and unjust, that is to say, what should and should not be done by each man or by all together." This is necessarily so, because "the right of the

sovereign in the State is just the *Jus Naturae* itself" in its fullest and most adequate expression.

Hence the State is not bound to follow any law, human or divine, except the law of its own unity and permanence. This is the divine law for it. And it has not only the right, but the duty to see that the outward exercise of both morality and religion is of such a nature as will maintain and develop its own integrity and vigour. For there can be no true permanence for either morality or religion, if the stable social life which enables men to live together is destroyed.

"That is the highest morality which tends to promote the peace and tranquillity of the State." "Piety towards one's country is the highest kind of goodness that one can exhibit. For if the State is destroyed, nothing good can endure. Everything will then be uncertain, and only hatred and wickedness will reign supreme, and keep all men in the utmost apprehension. From this it follows that nothing can be a moral duty to one's neighbour which is not really immoral if injury to the State as a whole would follow from such an action. Nor can there be any wrong done to one's neighbour, which is not really an act of piety if it is done with a view to the preservation of the State. For example, it may be a moral action to give my coat as well to him who contends with me and would take away my cloak; but when it is decreed that this is inconsistent with the conservation of the State, it becomes my duty rather to see that he is brought before the judge, even though this should lead to his being put to death. And it is for this reason that Manlius Torquatus is justly celebrated because he set a higher value on the welfare of his country than on piety toward his son. . . . No one, then, can truly obey God if he does not accommodate the exercise of that morality by which every one is bound, to the public welfare; and he does not do this, unless he obeys all the decrees of the sovereign in the State. And since we have, by divine command, a moral duty to all men without exception, and are bound to do harm to no one, it follows that it is not lawful for any one to be of service to one man in a way which is harmful to another, much less to act in a way which is harmful to the whole State. Hence no one can act with true piety toward his neighbour unless he accommodates his morality and his religion to the welfare of the civil community" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 19).

Spinoza finds in Christ's advice to his disciples, 'whosoever will strike you on the one cheek turn to him the other also,' a confirmation of this principle. For this moral counsel was given "to men oppressed, who lived in a State that was corrupt, in which justice was contemned, and whose ruin seemed at hand. . . . Thus the endurance of any injury, and non-resistance to the wicked, is a moral virtue only where justice is not

maintained, and in times of oppression, but not in a good State. Nay in a good State, which upholds and enforces Justice, each man is bound, if he would be called just, to bring before the judges any injury done to him, not out of revenge, but to the end that Justice and the law of the land may be maintained, and that the bad may not find their wickedness advantageous" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 7). Thus "it is the duty of the sovereign alone to determine in what way men ought to be of service to their neighbours. . . . For no private man can know what is for the welfare of the State, unless from the decree of the sovereign, whose peculiar function it is to transact public affairs. Therefore no one can be morally virtuous, or obedient to God, unless he obeys all the commands of the sovereign. And this is borne out by men's practice. For if the sovereign has adjudged any one, whether he be a citizen or an alien, a private person or one in authority, to be worthy of death or an enemy, it is not lawful for any of the citizens to assist him. Similarly, although the Hebrews were told that each man should love his neighbour as himself, yet were they bound to bring before the judge the case of any one who had done anything contrary to the laws, and they were even bound to kill him if he were condemned to death" (*Ibid.*, Ch. 16).

Spinoza's contention is, that while the State does not originate morality and religion, it is an indispensable means of their development. Hence these have been at every stage of social life relative to the particular community, and have had the force and validity of law, duty, or obligation in so far as they were the conditions of the State's security, and only in this measure. A moral code which would destroy the order of life, which alone makes the development of morality possible, is a self-contradiction. Thus nothing can be a virtue or a duty for any individual save as this virtue or duty is mediated by, or is a means to, the preservation and development of the larger and wider life which the civil order makes stable and rich for all men. And to determine what is and is not virtuous is one of the functions of him or of those who make the laws, just because every duty must be relative to other duties, and get its value and obligatory nature from its place in one general system or order of life. All right and duty must flow from one source, or pass through one transforming and unifying centre. It is for this reason that the power and authority of the State ought to be absolute, namely, because perfect happiness and efficiency are attainable by the citizens only as their lives and lines of

action, their rights and duties, fit into one another, and thereby, instead of bringing about conflict and dispute, do bring about an existence whose activities are mutually helpful and strengthening.

Various difficulties and objections to this view present themselves. (1) Is the State's right and authority quite absolute? Does the individual man not enjoy some rights which the State did not make and cannot take away? And (2) Is the State not bound to have regard to morality and religion, that is, to the divine law, and if so, how can its authority be called absolute? These two difficulties we shall deal with in the next two chapters. The one further point which should be noted here is, that this absolute authority vested in the State has necessarily another side or aspect, namely, that it is vested in it wholly and solely in the interest of the citizens.

That is to say, the State has no interest of its own other than the peace, happiness, and prosperity of those who constitute it. We have already seen that the right of the ruler is the loyalty and obedience and power of his subjects. It is but another way of expressing the same truth to say that the absolute power vested in the State means the unity, co-operation, correlation, and harmony of its members, since the absence of this power in any measure is the proportionate absence of oneness of mind in the body politic, and therefore of that unity and effectiveness of action which 'one mind' alone can ensure.

This explains why Spinoza asserts that in the *status civilis* the Natural Right of each man is, and yet is not, lost to him. It is lost to him as an individual who is a law and an end to himself, but it is not lost to him, but realised by him in much fuller measure, as a citizen. He gives up his right as vested in, and sanctioned, and maintained by himself alone, to receive in exchange for it a right vested in him as a member of a civil community and sanctioned and maintained by the force and will of the one mind which is the strength and permanence of a nation. He gives up a right which, in practical exercise, was no real or effective right or power at all, that he may by such renunciation gain

a right which is power, a right which he enjoys and exercises in the security, and through the richer and fuller life, which organised rule alone can afford.

Thus the Natural Right of the individual does not cease in the State ; it only ceases to belong to him as an individual, in order that he may enjoy it in larger measure and in a form which brings more real happiness, as a citizen and a member of a community. Natural Right or power therefore is not extinguished or destroyed by the State. Only the lowest and least adequate form of it is ; and it is destroyed merely in the sense that no one can, seeing that every man seeks what seems to him his interest, desire to be a law to himself and to give up thereby all the blessings and advantages which settled Society puts within his reach. But in no other sense than this can the State extinguish Natural Right, namely, by outbidding it in the open free judgment of men who seek for themselves at all times what seems to them their welfare. If at any time the State does not outbid in real goodness of life that *status naturalis* in which each man is a law to himself, the lower form of Natural Right again inevitably reasserts itself, that is to say, the state of war takes the place of the state of peace. For the state of peace has a right to men's loyalty and allegiance only as it furnishes to them a life of greater intrinsic worth and of greater happiness than they would achieve in any other way. If at any time, or in the case of any individual, the civil order does not do this, it has no real hold or power over such men's souls. That is to say, in such cases it has not had transferred to it by outbidding or exhausting them, the Natural Rights of certain individuals, and is in that measure impotent in its control over them.

Thus the more absolute and complete the power of the State over men's souls, and the fewer men there are who wish to violate its laws, and the fewer the offences that are committed against its authority and decree, the happier and the more harmonious will be the life of every citizen. For each man can transfer his natural power of acting to the State, and will to obey its laws, only as he judges that the State is doing better for him than he could do for

himself. Hence a State with absolute power over men's spirits is necessarily one which is doing its work most in their interest, and is through its own efficiency accomplishing for each and for all what each really wants done, but which no one can accomplish, save in and through the State. A strong, stable, and absolute government and civil order are the best security for, and the highest instrument of, the moral and intellectual progress, the happiness, peace, prosperity, and enduring social relations of every citizen within their jurisdiction. The strength of the State *is* the strength of each of its members, and its weakness their worst enemy. Only he who did not understand the conditions of his own and others' happiness could hope to benefit himself and others as 'individuals' by reserving as much as possible from the State's control. For that only can possibly be good either for him or for them which has first passed through the 'fiery trial' of being forced into a definite place, and made to fulfil a definite function, within a single common life, or a single system of right and of duty.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, SPEECH, AND RELIGION.

TO the absolute power which the best State will enjoy there is an apparent exception. The State cannot make men think, speak, or hold what religious beliefs it pleases. It has no power to do this, and therefore it has no right to attempt it; for whatever it attempts without having also the power to effect it is a sign of its weakness, impotence, or incapacity, and of its ignorance of its proper function and work. We have already seen that the State can take cognisance of actions only, not of thoughts, motives, or opinions, and that it can enforce only outward conformity of conduct, although the ultimate end of this enforcement of conformity is to make men follow certain courses of action because they are intrinsically good. But this ultimate end of all law, law cannot enforce, because its way of acting is not capable of accomplishing this directly and immediately.

Thus civil law must, if it is to do its work to most purpose, recognise the conditions of its own efficiency, and not try to do what it is not able to do. For every abortive and unsuccessful exercise of its (nominal) rights makes it less worthy of respect and obedience, and brings its decrees the more into disrepute and contempt. Men necessarily despise both the law-giver and his laws, if they find that he does not know what is, and is not, possible to him. Every inefficient law made or enacted by a ruler is a proof that the same 'taint' is to be found, in some degree, in all his other laws, and so it inevitably weakens the authority, right, and power which he would otherwise have enjoyed. We have already

considered in previous chapters some of the conditions of government and law. But another condition or 'limit' which is of the utmost importance is that which comes from the inalienable power, which is vested in every man, of thinking or forming a judgment for himself about truth and falsehood, about his own welfare, and about his relation to God. This is a power which the State cannot take over, nor can the individual transfer it either to the whole community or to another man, even if he wished to do this. No more in the *status civilis* than in the *status naturalis* can a man think according to the dictation of another. Thus there are some powers in the individual which cannot be transferred, but which necessarily remain vested in him, however absolute the authority and right of the State of which he is a citizen.

"Since no one can be so entirely deprived of his power of defending himself as to cease to be a man, I conclude that no one can quite renounce his Natural Right, and that the subjects retain some powers, as it were, by right of Nature, which cannot be taken away from them without great danger to the State. These powers are granted to them either tacitly, or else by some express stipulation with the sovereign" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Preface). And later on in the same Treatise (Ch. 17), speaking of the view which Hobbes had maintained, that the Natural Right of the subjects was absolutely and entirely transferred to the sovereign in the State, and that there were therefore no limits to the sovereign's authority Spinoza says, "Although the view just explained, which involves that the sovereign in the State has right over everything, and that the Natural Right of every man has been wholly transferred to him, is in great measure confirmed by facts, and although the actual government of men may be so arranged that it approximates to it more and more, yet can it never be other than theoretical in many respects. For no one will ever be able to transfer his power, and consequently his rights, to another so completely that he ceases to be a man, nor will there ever exist in the State a sovereign power which can bring about whatever it pleases. It would be quite futile, for example, for the sovereign to command a subject to hate one who has done him kindness, to love the man who has injured him, not to resent injuries, not to wish to be delivered from fear, and very many other such things which follow necessarily from the laws of human nature. Experience also, I think, teaches this most clearly, for men have never so entirely renounced their rights, and so completely transferred them to another man, that the ruler who received that right and power had not more reason to fear the citizens, even although they had only the rights of private men, than he had to fear the enemy. A State's

danger comes much more from its own subjects than from other States. And indeed, if men could be so entirely deprived of their Natural Right that they could ever after do nothing except by the will of those who wielded supreme authority, the most violent rule might be exercised over the subjects with impunity. This seems to be an impossible state of matters. Hence it must be admitted that every man reserves to himself as matter of right certain things which depend on his own decision alone." /

One feature of interest in this last passage is, that it marks the distinct and definite parting of company with Hobbes, and the recognition that there are 'limits' of some kind to all sovereign power. What the nature of these limits is Spinoza has not yet clearly seen, and he is inclined to speak of them as if they were limits imposed upon sovereignty from without, or as if the subjects reserved certain things from its control which it might have received and used. In this respect, his language and thought are less adequate than they afterwards are in the *Tractatus Politicus*, in which the ruling principle right through is that these powers which are reserved from the State's control are not really 'limits,' or limitations of a power which it might have had with advantage to itself, but simply the essential conditions on which all sovereignty rests, and the absence of which, or the real transference of which, would put an end to both the sovereign and his subjects in their mutual relations. But the main idea pervades both Treatises, namely, that sovereignty is not and cannot be *unlimited*, such a notion being inconceivable and impossible. And this principle clearly separates Spinoza's view, alike in its earlier and in its later form, from that of Hobbes.

There are then certain powers or rights which cannot be renounced by any individual.

"A man's power of free judgment cannot be transferred to another."
"If it were equally easy to control men's souls as to control their tongues, every ruler would reign safely, and no government would be violent or tyrannical. For, in such a case, every one would live in accordance with the judgment of the rulers, and would make their decree the test of truth and falsity, of goodness and badness, of the fair and the unfair. But this, as we have already said, cannot be done, namely, that a man's mind be wholly under the control of another, because no one can transfer to another his natural right or his power of reasoning freely and of passing judgment on any matter, nor can he even be forced to do this. It is just

for this reason that a rule which would lord it over men's souls is regarded as a violent or oppressive one, and that the sovereign in the State seems to wrong his subjects, and to usurp their rights, when he attempts to prescribe to each man what he should embrace as true and reject as false, and by what opinions each man's spirit should be moved to devotion towards God ; for these are rights vested in the individual, and no one can renounce them even if he wish to do so.

"I admit indeed that a man's judgment may be preoccupied in many and almost incredible ways, and that thus, although not directly under the control of another, it may yet be so dependent on another man's opinion that it may properly be said to be in subjection to him. Yet, however successful astuteness may have been in this direction, it has never succeeded in disproving the teaching of experience, that men's minds are no less various than their tastes. Even Moses, who had, not by guile but by his divine capacity, gained the greatest influence over the minds of the people, and was considered to be divine, and to speak and act by divine inspiration, was unable to escape base rumour and misrepresentation" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 20).

Thus one reason why the State has no right to prescribe what opinions men should hold, is that it has no power to make them believe contrary to their own judgment, or except in accordance therewith. Its power finds a limit or a condition here, for this capacity for thinking and judging which is vested in every man is prior even to the State itself. The State springs out of it, and is maintained by it, but does not create it. Thought in each man is an inalienable function, for the State can think, plan, reason, will only in and through individual men. This is the essence of the human mind, while Justice, Injustice, the State, and civil society are products of it or 'extrinsic notions,' that is to say, forms in which thought embodies itself, and through which it achieves greater and more lasting conquests. Hence the servant or instrument can never, without ceasing to be even so much, turn its strength against the power that called it into being and maintains it for its own furtherance. Free judgment or free thought is the very end for the sake of which the State exists ; and thus it must ever remain the absolute good which no State has any power or right to encroach upon. As a matter of fact, the State cannot possibly encroach upon the individual's judgment as to what is true and false, good and bad, pious

and impious. For God has constituted this right in such a way that it need fear infringement or violence from no quarter. Compulsion here is not even possible. And any government which tries to force men to think certain things to be true or false, good or bad, religious or irreligious, is undermining its own foundation, but in no wise encroaching upon the self-determining thought or will of the individual. For this cannot be encroached upon. And the oppressive or violent nature of a government arises not from any constraint or restraint which it can really exercise over men's minds, but solely from the resistance and evil passions to which its ill-starred and fruitless attempt to do what it has no power or right to do, gives rise.

But if the right of free thought or judgment does thus, by its very nature, necessarily enjoy complete immunity from all violence or aggression from without, we cannot surely say the same about free speech. A man may be by divine ordination master of his own thoughts so long as he keeps them to himself; but, if he utters them, surely he makes himself amenable to, and should be controlled by, civil law. He who keeps his thoughts locked up in his own breast cannot do very much harm to the State, while he who is quite at liberty to say or publish or teach whatever he pleases may do it great harm.

Spinoza's answer to this is, that a theoretical distinction between freedom of thought and freedom of speech is possible, but that a practical one is not; and further, that the attempt to make one is very dangerous to the peace and welfare of the community. The power of holding one's tongue when one ought to, is one of the very rarest of virtues. And a freedom to think which was not also a freedom to give our 'thoughts a tongue' would have to most men no meaning or worth. For no one really thinks except to express his thoughts in some form. Hence, if men were constrained to speak in a certain way, they might say the words which they were induced to utter, but as no one would then believe that another really meant what he said, constraining men to say things whether they believed in them or not would be self-destructive. The whole value

and end of speech is to express a man's own thought, and it is a bond between men in the State because it fulfils this function. If then you make men speak, not as they think, but as some other authority does, you destroy the very quality which makes human speech a bond of union and harmony ; and while you do, in a sense, constrain them to speak as you wish, in a truer sense you do not accomplish even this, for by making men unable to take one another's words as the expression of their real beliefs and opinions, you simply destroy human speech altogether. The essence of speech is that each man finds his neighbour's mind or judgment in it. If you make this no longer so, speech has lost its life and soul, and any one who cares may have the carcase. Thus freedom of speech in the true sense is quite as much an inalienable right and power in the individual as freedom of thought, and the law has just as little power to constrain men to say only what it approves of, as it has to make them think only what it wishes them to think. And it has to be remembered that people can and do speak with many other organs than their tongues. They speak or communicate their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and wishes through the hand which holds a pen, through a movement of the eye, a curl of the lip, a scowl of the face, a smile, a tear, a blush, an eager look, a shrug of the shoulders, and so on. And if the speech of the tongue or the pen is constrained, men simply fall back upon these other modes of expressing their feelings and thoughts, and quickly make them nearly as efficient as the organ that has been forced from its natural use and service.

"It is only the right of acting according to their own judgment that men have renounced, not that of reasoning and judging. Thus while no one can, without impairing the right and authority which belongs to the sovereign in the State, *do* anything contrary to his decree, every man can quite well form his own opinions, and judge for himself, and consequently also say what he thinks." "A State can never, except with the most disastrous results, attempt to make men who hold different and even opposite views, speak only as the sovereign power directs. For how can the common people be expected to lock up their opinions in their own breasts, when even the most astute of men cannot do so even when they should? It is a universal failing among men that they confide their designs to others,

even when there is need of secrecy. Thus a government under which men are prevented from expressing, and from teaching, their opinions will be a most oppressive one, while that will be a well-ordered one in which this freedom is conceded to every one" (*Ibid.*, Ch. 19). "Even supposing that such freedom of thought and of speech could be so controlled that no one dared to open his mouth except according to the prescript of the sovereign power in the State, yet this would never succeed in effecting that men *thought* only what the sovereign wished them to think. And in this way it would necessarily follow that men would every day be saying what they did not believe. Thus mutual trust, that first necessity of State, would be destroyed, and abominable adulation and perfidy would be fostered; and from this again there would come deceit and the corruption of all good arts.

"But this whole supposition is an absurd one. For it is quite impossible that any such regulation of men's speech should take place. They cannot be made to speak by the book. On the contrary, the more the attempt is made to take away freedom of speech from men, the more stubbornly do they resist it. . . . For men in general have been so constituted that there is nothing they will endure with so little patience, as that views which they believe to be true should be counted crimes against the law, or that what moves them to the service of God and of man should be treated as wickedness. Under such circumstances men do not think it disgraceful, but most honourable, to hold the laws in abhorrence and to refrain from no action against the ruler; and thus they stir up rebellion and shrink from no wickedness" (*Ibid.*).

Freedom of moral and religious belief is also an inalienable right vested in the individual man which no State can possibly usurp; and the State which attempts to do so, is putting its hand into a hornet's nest, from which only a disastrous and disgraceful retreat is possible. This freedom of religious opinion is really only one form or expression of that general freedom of thought which we have already shown to be vested inviolably in the individual man; but it is so important a form of it, that we may notice it by itself. Spinoza holds that this liberty to form and to hold one's own religious beliefs is so completely one with each man's nature, that no organised Society, whether a State or a Church, has any right to interfere with or encroach upon it. And such an outward authority has no right, because God has given it no power, to act in this way. Thus what is called an interference or encroachment is not really so, but only a futile and vain attempt and self-deception. He is a very wise man

indeed who knows even what he himself believes. And a State or Church which hopes to secure that all its members shall really believe as it enjoins simply shows how little it understands the nature of real belief in men. A man's belief is not what he is ready to subscribe to, or to say that he believes. For in the first place, a man may say that he holds a belief, though himself well aware that he does not. Yet in such a case every outward authority is helpless, for it can only take a man's word for his belief, and his word may be a deliberate lie. Secondly, a man may say that he holds a certain belief whether he understands it or not, that is, whether it is a really operative idea in his thought and endeavour or not. A man can say anything in words, and assent to any proposition is all the easier the less we have thought over or about it for ourselves. In this case again, no organised society has any power over, or check upon, or means of appraising the worth of, a man's verbal profession of belief. Thirdly, a man may himself honestly think that he holds a certain doctrine, yet he may not really do so. Self-deception is as easy in this province as in any other. Men hold many beliefs in a quite formal way, beliefs which are not really the motives of their actions, or the operative principles in their lives. They assent verbally to certain doctrines, and yet frame their conduct and direct their affairs on quite different and even opposite principles.

In each and all of these cases Spinoza holds that there is no real belief at all. The men in these instances do not actually hold the opinions they express, or assent to, in words. Yet a State or a Church which attempts to produce identity of belief *has* to take all this conscious or unconscious non-belief or deception as if it were the genuine article ; and to *have* to do this is very bad both for the State and the Church, and also for the individuals who thus get a kind of official sanction to their own deception, ignorance, indolence, or merely verbal soundness. An institution or order of life which assumes that all men can be made really to hold the same beliefs is laying up for itself as well as for its members an endless source of trouble, and dispute, and intellectual deadness or dishonesty. For God has not so made men that

they *can* really believe anything, except on the authority of the truth, that is on the authority of those facts which come within the range of their own intelligence. Nothing on earth has any power within a man's soul, except what he himself believes from his own judgment to be true. And the fact that the State or the Church has declared a thing to be true is quite irrelevant. The truth does not in any sphere depend on who has, or has not, given it sanction or authority. To assume this is to put the cart before the horse. It is the truth, or the knowledge of the truth, which gives sanction and authority to any institution or organisation. The latter stands in, and by, and through the hold it has upon, the truth in any particular sphere of existence. Hence all real influence which any institution, whether civil or sacred, can exercise over men's minds or souls comes from, and is commensurate with, the measure in which it enables them to see, to grasp, and to make their own the 'eternal truth' of human nature and of its relation to the world and to God. This is God's law, the law according to which institutions flourish and decay, the law which gives them place in, and power over, human endeavour, and the law which writes 'Ichabod' upon them when they begin to assume that they can make binding upon men what God has not already made true for these men's own minds and hearts.

What then *is* the nature of real belief, and how can we tell what opinions or views we ourselves or other men really hold? Only in one way. Our actions are our belief, or at least they are the one absolutely infallible test we have of our own and other men's beliefs. All that we believe in we do, and what we do not do, we do not believe in. This is a 'hard saying,' but a true one. For it is a divine law of human nature that we cannot have an idea without thinking it, and cannot think it without acting on it. We can no more believe in a thing, and not embody our belief in our every action, than we can know that 2 and 2 make four, and yet believe that they make five, and act as if we believed this. Thus the one sure sign of a man's creed is his conduct. He who says that he loves, or ought to love, God above all and to love his neighbour as himself, and yet envies and hates, is

sordid and narrow-minded, exacting and inconsiderate, does not really hold any such belief even as an 'ought' or ideal. A man cannot believe in love, kindness, mercy, mutual helpfulness, justice, and honour, if he does not make these the immanent and formative principles of his life and endeavour. He may indeed think that he believes in them, and he may believe in them in the sense that he assents to them in the abstract as good for men in general, but yet he is self-deceived, and does not truly believe in them, seeing that he does not know what they really are. Spinoza always insists that men do not necessarily mean the same thing, though they use the same words. The value of the same set of words may differ as widely as the value of a cheque or a banknote does according to the signature it bears. And the real value of our words or thoughts is the kind of life which they enable us and others to attain. Propositions to which we assent are neither understood, nor believed in by us, except as they are thus embodied.

The conclusion to be drawn from this argument is that the wisdom of the State, and of its Sovereign, consists in recognising these divine laws or conditions of human nature, and in shaping all civil regulation of conduct in harmony with them. This is its duty, the primary and inviolable condition of its own health and efficiency, namely, that it shall recognise that certain ways of affecting and controlling men are not open to it. Freedom of thought, of speech, and of religious belief in even the meanest of its subjects no State or rule, however powerful, can possibly encroach upon; and if it attempt the impossible, instead of proving the absoluteness of its authority, it will only be taking the surest means to convince its own citizens how ignorant it is of its own proper function, and how unworthy it is of their allegiance. For as it has no means at its disposal for forcing men to think, speak, and believe as it pleases, it is only incapacity which could lead it to attempt this. We do a thing in the wrong way only because we do not see the right way of doing it. And the State which tries to regulate men's actions by prescribing what they shall, or ought to, think, speak and believe is going the wrong way

to work, and seeking to effect in one way results which God has ordained can only be effected in another and quite different way.

Thus a State which sees what it cannot do, or the bounds which it cannot pass, will also recognise in what its power and efficiency do really consist. And not only will it thus be prevented from embarking on a policy of repression that could end only in its own ruin, it will also succeed in turning 'necessity to glorious gain.' For it will, by giving the sanction of its authority to that which it cannot oppose, gain all the credit and influence and power which would otherwise be used against it. As free thought, free speech, and freedom of religious belief will exist in spite of all the State could do to suppress them, the path of true safety for it is to welcome what it cannot change, and to enlist on its side, and in its interest, the forces that would else become its worst enemy. And this it can do so completely that these inviolable conditions, or limits, of State action become the strongest weapons or powers by which it maintains its existence and asserts its authority. For no State has such security of tenure, none is so united within itself, nor so well-equipped to meet danger from without, as the State which welcomes free thought and free speech and freedom of religious belief, and fosters them to the utmost ; while none is so weak and unstable, so divided against itself, and so easily conquered from without as the State which makes these, the strongest powers within it, its enemy.

This idea Spinoza illustrates from its positive, and from its negative side. That is to say, he shows both the advantages which come to the State from allowing and promoting freedom of thought within its borders, and also the manifold evils and dangers which inevitably arise from attempting to suppress, or to repress them by prescribing what men ought and ought not to believe and to say. We shall take the negative aspect of the principle first.

First of all, laws enacted in order to regulate what men shall hold as true and reject as false, are entirely useless, seeing that the sanction or prohibition of the State does not make a thing true or false ; nay not only useless, but per-

nicious, for "those who believe the views thus condemned to be sound, will not be able to obey the laws, while those who do consider the views false will look upon the laws which forbid such opinions as privileges, and will prevent the rulers of the State repealing them even when they may wish to do so." That is to say, those who believe these opinions will not be able to obey the law, and will necessarily contemn and resist it, while those who do not believe them, will think the law which defends their view a necessary sanction of their belief, and will prevent any repeal of the law even if the lawmaker sees that the opinions it was designed to protect are false. It is on this ground that Spinoza thinks it most perilous for a State to attempt to settle or enact laws about religion, or questions of belief and of opinion; or to take the side of any party or sect in religion. For these things are in no way under its control. Speculative matters are not the State's province at all. A doctrine is no more true or binding although the State recognise it, and it does not cease to be the truth even if the State forbid it. The State's province is the regulation of men's actions through their own free thought and judgment. Anything which can be matter of dispute and debate does not fall within the duty of the civil ruler to determine, as his judgment on the point is of no more weight or authority than that of any other man. Questions of opinion and belief can be settled only by clear and full discussion and enquiry. And if the civil ruler take sides with one party, it is only a chance whether he adopt the true view or the false one, and whichever side he takes he surely alienates all who hold the opposite view. His safety lies in refusing to take sides at all on matters of opinion where his authority is quite irrelevant, and regarding which men may quite lawfully hold diverse views. His duty is to judge men by their actions, and to control their actions; but not to endanger the real power and authority which he enjoys within this province by allowing the organised force of the State to be made the tool of any party or sect, or the instrument of oppression to any of the citizens who act virtuously.

Secondly, laws to regulate men's beliefs are bad, because

they bear most hardly on the men of intelligence, candour, and virtue, and hardly affect at all those who, caring nothing for the truth, are ready to change their creed with any change in the law. Laws which inevitably repress the real virtue and excellence of human nature must be bad, since it was to further this virtue and excellence that the State and the law came into existence, and it is only in and through these that it flourishes. The enactment of laws which are a terror to the good and enlightened, and a license to the evil-disposed and the ignorant, is the weakness and not the strength of a nation, for this is just to turn the means and the instrument devised to support and further the good life against the very end which brought it into being. It is to wither up the real root of all development (*conatus*).

For "it is not the men who are addicted to avarice and flattery, and such like narrow souls whose ideal of happiness is a pile of money, or a well-filled stomach, who feel such laws irksome, but those whom a good education, moral uprightness, and *virtus* have made free." "If we consider the constitution of human nature, it will be evident that laws enacted to regulate men's opinions are no restraint upon the bad, but only upon the enlightened, and they are no limit upon the evil-disposed, but only serve to irritate men of high integrity, and cannot therefore be enforced without grave danger to the State."

"Lastly, the numerous schisms by which the Church has been vexed have mostly arisen from the fact that the rulers have tried to settle by law the disputes and controversies of the theologians. For were not men impelled by the hope of enlisting on their side the laws and the civil ruler, and gaining popular applause by triumphing over their opponents, and attaining to honour, they would not act so unfairly by one another, nor would their disputes be so bitter. This is the teaching not merely of Reason; experience also furnishes instances of it daily. That is to say, laws which lay down what each man should believe, and which forbid the saying or writing of anything that is contrary to this view, are frequently passed to conciliate, or rather in subservience to, the wrath of those who cannot endure the free exercise of the intelligence. For in this way such men are able, by appealing to these laws, to lash the religious devotion of the common people into a madness, and to direct it against whomsoever they will. [Spinoza points out in another place that the condemnation and crucifixion of Christ was due to these precise causes.] But how much better it would be to check the insensate rage to which the common people are subject, than to make laws which only devotion to intellectual and moral virtue could lead men to violate, and to narrow the State so

that it has no room for men of high and free intelligence. What greater misfortune can ever befall a State than that men of honour and integrity should be driven out from it, because they differ in their opinions and will not profess beliefs they do not entertain. What policy more self-destructive can any nation follow than to regard as public enemies, and deserving of death, men who have committed no crime or wickedness save that of freely exercising their intelligence. For in this way the scaffold, which should be the terror of the bad, becomes glorified as the stage on which are displayed the noblest deeds of heroism and virtue, deeds rendered all the more noble by the public disgrace which encompasses them. For men who are conscious of their integrity do not fear to die the death of a malefactor, nor does the fear of punishment vanquish their spirits. For their souls are wrung by no remorse for the wickedness of their deed, nay, they think it an honour, and not a punishment at all, to give their lives for a righteous cause, and a privilege to perish in defence of freedom. What then is gained by putting such men to death? The dull and impotent of soul do not understand the cause of such men's willingness to die, while it is only the seditious who hate it, and men of integrity love it all the more. Thus nothing is really gained except to render men more ready to follow in their footsteps, or at least to conceal their own real opinions.

"If then mutual trust, and not hypocrisy, is to reign in the State, and if the rulers are to exercise their sovereign power in the best way, and not be forced to submit to have their line of action determined by the disorderly, freedom of thought must be granted, and men must be so governed that they can live together in peace, even though they do hold different and even opposite views. And there can be no doubt that this mode of exercising rule is the best, and suffers from the fewest disadvantages, seeing that it is most consonant with human nature" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 20). "Wherever the attempt is made to take away liberty from men, and the opinions, not the souls (which alone can do wrong), of those who do not conform are called in question, there it is honour and integrity which are held up to public reprobation. But the death of such men appears rather a martyrdom than a punishment; and it serves to rouse men's indignation, and move their compassion, or even to make them thirst to revenge their death, rather than to frighten them. Moreover, under such laws all good arts, and men's trust in one another, are corrupted, flattery and deception are encouraged, and schismatics glory in having defeated their opponents, and gained the countenance and support of the civil rulers to certain tenets which depend for their explanation and interpretation upon the leaders of this sect" (*Ibid.*).

The positive side of this truth Spinoza is no less anxious to insist upon. "Rulers exercise their sovereign rights in the best way (*optime*), and can preserve the security of the State,

if there be conceded to every one the freedom both to think as he pleases, and to speak as he thinks." The City of Amsterdam is more than once extolled as an instance of the benefits that spring from freedom of thought, and of speech, and of religion. And in the same spirit we are told that if a man can show that any law is contrary to sound Reason, and should therefore be repealed, and if he at the same time submits his opinion to the judgment of the sovereign (who alone has the right to make and repeal laws), and in the meantime does nothing contrary to the terms of the actual law, he deserves well of the State as one of its best citizens.

That the fostering and development of human intelligence and will is the one supreme end for the sake of which the State exists at all,—this is the dominating principle of Spinoza's whole theory of Politics, and as we have already studied it from many points of view, we need not further elaborate it. If the State which is founded on, and maintained and directed by, Reason does not recognise whence all its strength and unity and security come, its day of power and prosperity will be a short one. If it know no use for the high intelligence, the love of truth, the respect for honour and for virtue, which should be its glory and its greatness, it will not long command the reverence and obedience of its subjects. For it is the objects of desire which these highly gifted souls reveal, and put within the reach of all, that make the State strong, united, and free.

Spinoza indeed recognises that this freedom of belief and of speech brings certain dangers with it. But his reply is (as in a parallel case we have already considered), the risk is worth taking. Nothing in the world is without some possible harm. But if the object or end is of value, you cannot really lose in the end by strenuously willing it, and the more you prize the end, and teach others to prize it, the less risk and loss will there be. The cure for 'free thought' in the bad sense is freer thought, the cure for rationalism is a more thorough rationalism, the cure for the liberty which is licence is more liberty. Repression, restraint, compulsion are far more dangerous, because they can yield no lasting peace, no real unity of belief, no love of God or of goodness.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE STATE'S RELATION TO MORALITY AND RELIGION.

WE have already seen that the State cannot make men think, believe, or speak as it pleases, or at its dictation. This internal side of human endeavour cannot be intruded upon by any outward authority. A man's idea of what is true and false, good and bad, pious and impious, is by divine right a function of his own nature. He can be influenced only through his own thought of what constitutes his welfare and happiness. Thus, what Spinoza calls the internal *cultus* of morality and religion is inviolably secured from all natural or physical determination. A man has the power to be as good, and to serve God as well, under the most tyrannical of governments as under the most free, in the sense that no State or ruler has the power to make him bad, to keep him from believing what he thinks true, or to prevent him loving and serving God with all his heart and thus enjoying the highest felicity of soul. And this is the very life or essence of all morality and religion, to love God with all one's heart and one's neighbour as one's self. Hence no State or law can ever *really* interfere with a man's morality or religion, as it has no power to make him bad or irreligious. It cannot make him hate God or love him less, it cannot make him less kind, considerate, just, merciful, generous, or pure than he wills to be. All this is *sui juris* of the individual, and it is for this reason that the moral and the religious life are for ever raised above all human oppression. They are the end to which the State is no more than a means ; for character, or the love of man through the love of God, is the supreme good

which enjoys, in virtue of its own divine right, an inviolable and all-controlling influence over human nature.

But there is a complementary truth which Spinoza contends for, namely, that morality and religion have also an outward exercise or cultus, and that in this respect they not only are amenable to State control, but ought to be controlled by the State in the interest of the good life itself. A man may love God and his neighbour with his whole soul, yet ought he to act towards his neighbour in such ways only, and serve God through such ceremonies only, as are most conducive to the peace, welfare, and prosperity of the State of which he is a member? Spinoza holds that not only ought all outward embodiments of goodness and of piety to be accommodated or adapted to the maintenance of a settled order of life, but also that this has always been the case wherever the life of any nation has been stable and enduring. The harmony of social existence demands that there shall be one authority with supreme power and right to control and direct all actions. This does not mean of course that it ought to settle when each man shall go to bed or dine, but only that the general lines of human endeavour shall be definitely laid down, and be well maintained, and that nothing inconsistent with them shall be done with impunity or with profit to the offender.

Thus while thought and belief are, and must always remain, *sui juris*, or an inalienable function of the individual, *action* never can thus be an individual right. The State ought to direct or sanction or permit all conduct whatsoever, and ought not to recognise any authority other than its own for determining what men ought and ought not to do. If it do recognise any other authority within its borders as the director and guide of its citizens' lives, it thereby abdicates its position, and instead of the self-government which it should, in the best interests of all its members, secure and exercise, it becomes a subordinate and a slave.

It is from this point of view that Spinoza rejects the claim of any infallible church to determine what actions are, and are not, lawful and pious. Such an *imperium in imperio* is fatal to all harmonious life and united action within the

community. It makes the citizens divide their allegiance between a civil and a sacred authority, and it renders civil power precarious, and almost inevitably tyrannical and arbitrary. If men are to enjoy a common life of mutual help and trust, there can only be one supreme rule of all conduct, for dual authority is the sure source of discord, strife, and weakness. Thus the actions in and through which goodness and piety are to express themselves must be those which conduce to, or at least are not at variance with, the unity, authority, and autonomy of the State.

This Spinoza believes to be a necessity not only for the unity and the strength of the State, but also for the highest development of religious and moral duty. It is indeed God's will, or the divine law or command. For that is God's command, or the divine law, for man which is most necessary or serviceable to the growth of mutual love, kindness, helpfulness, truth, honour, and justice. Whatever enables man to make the most of the powers, intellectual and moral, which God has bestowed upon him, and to be of most real service to his fellowmen, is the divine law which God has written for his guidance and his well-being. No form of organisation, and no authority, has any right or power to violate this eternal law which God has "written with his own finger" upon man's nature; for "God's laws are no longer inscribed on tables of stone, but on men's hearts."

It is because rights and duties ought—ought, that is to say, if men are to live the richest and happiest existence possible for them—to form a perfect system, or a whole controlled and pervaded by one principle or one mind, that the State is untrue to itself, and is betraying the trust its citizens have reposed in it, if it allow any other authority to dictate to it, or to its subjects, what actions are and are not good, virtuous, pious, or religious. No matter in whose name it speak, or from what charter it derive its title, no other authority has any power or right to overbear or divide the sovereignty of the State over all questions of conduct and action. This is so, because no other body *can* have any title or right higher than, or even equal to, the right and power which God has conferred upon the State to devise

and maintain the conditions through which alone all the moral and intellectual virtues can be fostered and developed. If the civil order enjoys the highest peace and security and unity, all moral and religious excellences will flourish ; while if it is weak, self-divided, and unstable, hatred, irreligion, violence, strife, insolence, lust, and cruelty will more and more prevail, and "the dictates of right and reason will enjoy no more right than those of inclination and appetite."

This principle, that the State ought to be the supreme judge of what kinds of conduct are pious and impious, right and wrong, and cannot recognise any other authority above, or alongside its own without becoming the less a State, and the less deserving of the obedience of its subjects, Spinoza strongly maintains and defends. One interpretation of it ought however to be guarded against. It does not mean that the State may make right or wrong conduct, piety and impiety to be whatever it pleases. This, we have already seen, is impossible. It cannot make men live together in harmony on any footing, and through any kind of conduct and mutual relations, which it may arbitrarily fix for their guidance and control. On the contrary, it can govern and control their lives only as it recognises the eternal conditions which God has ordained for human welfare, and secures to its members those objects of desire which will alone make them live in harmony and co-operate with one another. And the State is strong and stable only as it is wise in its knowledge of these ends, and of the means through which they can be realised. It is just for this reason that freedom of thought and of speech should not only be permitted within the civil order, but should receive the greatest encouragement and fostering care. A State which has the good sense to welcome such freedom, and esteem it not as an enemy but as its best friend, is doing the very best thing for its own authority, independence, and security. For it has in this way put at its disposal the strongest force within it, the clear intelligence, the keen insight, the practical capacity, the eager and willing devotion of those who best know and will the welfare of themselves and of others. It can in this way regulate conduct with the authority and right which nothing

but wisdom really gives. It is saved from foolish action that could only recoil upon itself. And it can enjoy a stability and a permanence which only the free exercise and advantages of Reason can give. Thus the State's right to regulate conduct is not a right or a power to constitute good and bad, piety and impiety, in accordance with its own unlimited discretion. It is only a right to understand wherein these really consist, and to make general rules which will be binding on all its subjects. If it does this 'understanding' well, it will enjoy an ample authority; if ill, its authority will be small.

Yet while the power or authority of the State is inevitably conditioned in this way, the function which it fulfils is none the less of the highest importance. Its duty, or the duty of those who rule, is to determine, according to the best judgment they can form, what is really for the welfare of the community, and to settle this as the rule of action which shall be encouraged within the State by all the forms of constraint and of restraint which are necessary for acting upon the very diverse feelings, thoughts, and interests of the different men within it. Thus while the State may, and ought in its own interest, to welcome all the light upon the problems confronting it which may come from any quarter, from the thought, inspiration, or public spirit of any individual within it, it may not resign its right (which is equally its duty) of exercising its own judgment upon every such opinion or view. This is its prerogative, its end or purpose in the world. If it submit its judgment or will to any other, it has thereby resigned the office to which the world called it, and he to whose judgment it submits becomes the real ruler. Thus while every individual in a well-constituted State will have perfect liberty to think and to speak as he pleases, no one will, or should, have any liberty to act on his own opinion of what is just, virtuous, or pious, but only on the opinion which has been constituted the general law for all the citizens. It may happen that this general rule of what is virtuous and pious coincides with his own view, or it may not happen to coincide. In the latter case, he has no civil right to act on his own opinion, and he has a civil right to

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be punished if he persist in so acting. While in the former case his right to do the action is not a right derived from his own judgment, although his own judgment would have led him to take the same course, but a right conferred upon him, and no less a duty made obligatory upon him, by the State or the common mind which has decreed this course as the best for all.

That the judgment of the individual shall, before it take effect in action, be thus mediated by the whole system of rights and duties already existing, is the necessary condition of any settled and harmonious social life, and the only condition on which a State can possibly continue in existence. But we have already seen that the existence and conservation of the State is the indispensable means to the development of the best intellectual, moral, and religious powers in man; seeing that no other mode of making justice, love, truth, mercy, fidelity, and mutual helpfulness the supreme standard and principle of conduct has yet been discovered by man. Thus the only conclusion possible from this is that there can be no moral or religious duty binding upon any individual which would lead to the weakening or the destruction of the organised life which exists only to make "Justice and Love" supreme in human affairs, and apart from which the dictates of morality, of right reason and of religion, would exercise over the great mass of men no real influence or authority. Morality and religion have gained the place and power which they do have in men's affections and interests, just because the State and a settled social order have brought home to each man, in the precise way in which he could be most influenced, the value and the meaning of moral virtue and of religious faith.

While therefore morality and religion are of higher authority than any State or civil law can ever be, it is a fatal mistake to appreciate or depreciate the one at the expense of the other, or to put their claims to man's obedience and regard in opposing scales. If the State was devised solely to make morality and religion supreme, and if these can become supreme and unfolded only in and through such a settled order, how will it advantage either love to

man or love to God if you destroy the best instrument and most capable servant they have? Nothing but ignorance, or a failure to think out all the conditions that are essential to all moral endeavour and achievement, could make such a course seem desirable. The morality that does not know its best friend does not know itself; and the religious faith which quarrels with the 'merely secular' in law and institution and social conditions does not know the God who lives and works in and by them.

Thus there can be no law of God, or divine command, more sacred than that which bids us "maintain the State with all our might," because there is no divine command of higher authority than that which enjoins us to love our neighbour as ourselves, and we cannot possibly love our neighbour if we attempt to destroy what is for him, as well as for all others, the condition of the best and happiest existence. "The outward exercise of religion, and every moral duty, ought to be adapted to the peace and conservation of the State, if we would show ourselves truly obedient to God." Indeed, Spinoza holds that wherever a nation has enjoyed any secure and lengthened existence, religious and moral duty has been the outgrowth, or at least the support, of its civil order, and therefore adapted to its preservation and security. To the Hebrew it was a religious and moral duty to love his neighbour, *i.e.* his fellow-countrymen, and to hate the men of all other nations. "But after their kingdom was destroyed, and they were carried away captive into Babylon, Jeremiah taught them to study the safety of the State to which they were carried away captive. And when Christ saw that they were about to be scattered throughout the whole world, he taught them that they should love even their enemies. From all this it follows most clearly that religion has always had regard to the well-being of the State" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 19).

Thus the power and the right of the State extend to the regulation of all actions within it, whether these be called civil or sacred. Claims such as the Church of Rome makes to determine infallibly what is right and lawful for Kings and States and their subjects to do, and what it is unlawful

for them to do, Spinoza regards as not only inconsistent with the free exercise of that Reason which is God's best gift to man, but also as fatal to the peace, prosperity, and independence of any State that allows such dictation from without. For this is not the way at all in which God reveals to statesmen and to nations his divine laws and will for their prosperity. His law is that they shall work out their own salvation in the peculiar circumstances and conditions of their own life through the use of those powers of judgment, forethought, endeavour, military, speculative, religious, and political genius which grow with use, and strengthen the State which relies upon them. Thus the law that has really a supreme divine sanction in any community is that which will best realise the security and prosperity and true welfare of the State, and therefore of each citizen. Men can have no duty to God, or to one another, of higher or even of equal authority with this duty; for this is the sanction and the impulse of every other duty and relation they can have toward each other.

"The sovereign in the State may indeed take counsel with others, but his duty is to recognise no one as his superior, nor can he acknowledge any one else as the vindicator of any law, unless it be a prophet who has been expressly commissioned by God, and who has given indubitable signs of his commission. But even in such a case, it is not the man, but God himself, to whom the ruler is forced to submit himself. And if the ruler is not willing to yield obedience to God in his revealed law, he may disobey at his own peril, and to his own loss, seeing that neither civil nor natural right puts this out of his power" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16).

"When I said that those who exercise sovereign power in the State have sole power over all things, and that all right depends upon their decree alone, my statement applied to *jus sacrum* as well as to *jus civile*. For the rulers must be the interpreters and vindicators of both alike. And I wish to treat of this point with some fulness, as there are many who deny this right of dealing with sacred things to be vested in the rulers in the State, and who do not recognise them as the interpreters of the divine law, but arrogate to themselves the right to call them to account, to depose them, and even to get them excommunicated by the Church. But in thus acting, they are dividing the State, yea they are aiming at sovereign power for themselves. For it can be shown: I. that religion gets the force of a law solely from the decree of those who have the right of laying down an imperative vested in them; II. that God has no peculiar reign over men except through those who hold supreme power;

III. that religious observances and moral practice ought to be in harmony with the peace and welfare of the State ; and these outward expressions of religion and of morality ought therefore to be determined by the sovereign power which should also be their interpreter.

"I wish it to be noted carefully that I am here speaking only of the outward embodiment of morality and of the externals of religious worship, and not of morality itself and the reverence of the soul for God, nor even of the means by which the mind is led and internally disposed to worship and serve God with all its soul. For this inner reverence of the soul for God, and morality in its essential nature, are inviolably vested in each man, and cannot be transferred to any other authority.

"And what we mean by the Kingdom of God is sufficiently clear from what we have already said elsewhere. For we have shown that he observes God's law who, in accordance with God's command, makes justice and love the ruling principles of his conduct. That Kingdom, therefore, will be God's Kingdom in which Justice and Love have the force of a law and an imperative. And my statement does not depend on whether it is by the light of nature or by revelation that God teaches and commands men the true nature of and reverence for justice and love. It matters nothing in what way this has been revealed. What alone matters is that justice and love have supreme right and be the supreme law for men. If then I can show that justice and love cannot receive the force of law and imperative except from the law of the State, the natural inference will be that religion receives the force of law solely from the decree of those who have the right to command, and that God exercises no special reign over men except through those who rule the State" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 19).

"We see how disastrous it is both to religion and to the State to give the ministers of sacred things the right of enacting laws, or of intermeddling with affairs of State. And we see also how necessary it is, both for the State and for religion, to bestow upon the rulers in the State the right of deciding what is and is not lawful" (*Ibid.*, Ch. 18).

"All men know how much weight the right and authority regarding sacred matters has with the people, and how much every one hangs on the words of him who enjoys this authority. So much is this the case that he who has *this* authority vested in him is most entitled to the name of ruler, seeing that he exercises most control over men's spirits. Thus if any one seeks to deprive the rulers of this power, he is trying to divide the sovereignty. And from this there will necessarily arise, as there did arise between the Kings and the Priests amongst the Hebrews, disputes and differences which can never be settled.

"Indeed he who wishes to deprive the sovereign of this authority, affects the sovereignty himself. For what is left for the civil rulers at all to settle, if this right is denied them? They have no real sovereign power at all either about war or about any other matter, if they require to wait

for the opinion of some one else in order to learn whether what they consider advantageous for the State is moral or immoral, pious or impious. On the contrary, it is he who has the right of judging and laying down authoritatively what is right and wrong, lawful and unlawful, who really has the settlement of all things in his hands. Of this all ages have furnished examples. One only—a sample of the rest—I shall mention. Absolute right over sacred things was conceded to the Roman Pontiff. The result was that he succeeded by degrees in bringing every Monarch into subjection, and secured for himself the most absolute sovereignty. And although the Monarchs, and especially the German Emperors, afterwards tried to lessen his authority in some slight measure, not only were they not successful in this, but on the contrary they rallied many more supporters to his side. In fact, the very thing which no Monarch could accomplish by fire and sword, Churchmen effected solely by the pen. And this very fact proves how strong and powerful such authority is, and how necessary it is for the rulers in the State to retain it in their own hands.

“If we bear in mind, further, the points already noted, we will see that this arrangement is not only best for the State, but at the same time most conducive to the furtherance of morality and religion. For we saw that even the Prophets, although they were endowed with divine powers, yet because they were only private citizens, rather provoked than corrected their fellow-citizens by the freedom with which they admonished, rebuked, and reproached them, although these same men were easily turned from their evil courses when they were warned or punished by their Kings. Moreover, it was just for this reason, namely, because the right or authority was not vested wholly in the Kings, that they so often fell away from true religion, and carried almost all the people with them. And the same result has very frequently come about in Christian States from the same cause” (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 19).

And, in answer to the objection that this seems to put religion and morality at the mercy of a ruler who may himself be an immoral or an irreligious man, Spinoza says that there is no more danger of a ruler proving immoral and irreligious than of a Pope, a priest, a bishop, or a clergyman proving bad and profane. Such a contingency may happen as readily in the one case as in the other, because no organised Society, secular or sacred, can secure that none but men of the highest probity, honour, virtue, and religious faith shall belong to it, or attain office within it. God alone looketh on the heart, while man can judge of the heart only from the few actions which he sees, and even

these few he often, through his own defective perception, misjudges, mistaking the bad for good and the good for bad. But what human arrangements can do is to secure that the power, and the responsibility for its use, shall go together. If a 'spiritual director' really has the power in the State, but, because he is not the nominal ruler, escapes all responsibility and accountability for what is done, it cannot be expected that either the nominal or the real ruler will govern well. Give one man, or one body of men, the power and the conditions needed for doing their work in the most efficient way, and make them aware that to whom much is given of them much is expected and required ; but do not attempt the 'safe,' which is the most unsafe, course of giving little power, authority, prerogative, liberty, and requiring much service in return. Have a ruler, and make him feel that the whole political system expects him to do his duty, and will secure to him the highest honour, power, dignity, and influence along this line. But do not have a nominal ruler with all the responsibility for a people's welfare, and then put or allow in the background one with no public responsibility at all to whom the titular sovereign must defer. Such a course is sure to produce a tyrannical rule and a weak and divided State. Morality and religion will most surely get the force of law if the sovereign is left free to follow his own judgment of what is for the welfare of the State, and is not kept in tutelage to any one else even though such an one claim to speak in God's name; for such an outward authority with none of the responsibilities of office is no less dangerous to the peace and welfare of the citizens than to the prerogative and the authority of the sovereign.

"Some one may indeed ask, what if the sovereign in the State commands anything that is contrary to religion and to the obedience which we owe to God? Should we in such a case obey God or man? To this I reply briefly, that God should in all cases be obeyed when we have a sure and indubitable revelation of his will. But experience abundantly proves that men make the greatest mistakes, regarding what religion is and what it demands from them, and, according to the differences of their minds, they form and maintain stubbornly very various opinions. If therefore no one were bound by law to obey the sovereign power in the

State in any matter which the individual himself might think pertained to religion, the right of the State would depend entirely on the diverse judgments and emotions of each man. In such a case no one would be bound by any law which, in his judgment, enacted anything at variance with his faith and even his superstition, and thus each man would, under this pretext, be able to arrogate to himself a licence to do whatever he liked" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 16).

"The objection may be raised, are not the *status civilis* and the obedience of the subjects—such obedience as we have shown to be essential under a civil order—inconsistent with Religion by which we are bound to worship and serve God? But if we weigh the matter properly we will not find any difficulty. For the Mind, in its exercise of Reason or thought, is not subject to any sovereign power in the State, but is *sui juris*. For this reason, the true knowledge and love of God can be subjected to no one's sway, as neither can true love to one's neighbour be outwardly interfered with. And if we further note that the love of one's neighbour can display itself in no higher form than the maintenance of peace and the fostering of concord, we will not doubt that he has done all that duty demands who does for his neighbour all the service which loyalty to the laws of the State, that is to say, regard for harmony and peace within the community, allows" (*Tract. Pol.*, 3, 10).

Thus disobedience to a civil order which maintains a stable system of right and duty is never virtuous; nor has any man a right to refuse to recognise a law because he thinks he knows a better end or ideal. In most cases such a thought would be false, and even in those cases in which it is true, to attempt to make a higher ideal of life effective by weakening the essential means of all progress is to act in a suicidal way. Thus the man who cherishes the highest ideal of life for himself and for all will strive with most earnestness to obey all the laws that exist, knowing that by so acting, and by thus honouring the forms in which the good life has already won for itself a firm hold on the interest and affection of the great mass of the citizens, he is most surely promoting the higher life, and ensuring that it shall be a permanent attainment of human welfare, and not a spasmodic and evanescent reform which was well-intentioned, but could not fight for, and win, and keep its hold over men's souls.

But while obedience to a State that has won and kept the devotion of the great body of the citizens is always a

duty, and a duty which the most virtuous and religious man will be most eager to recognise, and to fulfil, alike in the letter and in the spirit, obedience is not the highest life open to an individual. For, though he who obeys the law, because it is the law, deserves well of the State, he who obeys the law, not because it is the law, but because he recognises the intrinsic goodness and worth of the ends—the mutual trust and mutual helpfulness, the love, mercy, friendship, peace, the good character and the development of man's highest powers of intelligence and will—for the sake of which these laws are enacted at all, is a still greater strength to the State and the community. The one man "obeys," but the other is "blessed." The one regards the law, not as the means of his highest freedom, but as a limit or yoke from which he would escape if he could get the satisfactions he seeks under any other conditions. He sees, of course, clearly, that he cannot do so, and therefore he remains subject or obedient to the law. But he has not reached the point of discerning that what he cannot do, namely, realise what seems to him his happiness except in and through general laws which secure to all others their happiness as well, is not the lessening of his freedom, but the enlargement of it. The truly good or "blessed" man does see this, and would will a good in which all could equally share, though there were no constraint or premium or penalty to make him follow this course. For he sees clearly that this is the true nature of his own welfare and the highest measure of happiness he can secure, and also that the law is enacted simply as the best means of leading the men who do not understand adequately the nature of their own highest happiness, gradually to understand and to will more and more what is really best for them and for the whole community. When "obedience to law" becomes the love of the best things in life, or the love of God, the man is free from the law, because, through such devotion to the end of all law, 'law has no more dominion over him.' He can no longer be said to 'obey' when he 'consents unto the law that it is good,' and enjoys that *felicitas* or *beatitudo* of spirit which devotion to the highest ends necessarily brings.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FORMS OF STATE—MONARCHY, ARISTOCRACY, AND DEMOCRACY.

WE have already considered in earlier chapters the general principles which all forms, or types, of State must observe, if they are to enjoy a secure and prosperous existence. A Monarchy must recognise the same essential laws of national health as an aristocracy or a democracy and *vice versa*. For these forms of political order differ from one another, neither in the end for which they are constituted, nor in the general conditions which they must recognise if they are to maintain their strength and efficiency, but only in their internal organization, or in the means which, in the peculiar circumstances of each nation, are best adapted for securing peace and lasting harmony. Thus there is no absolutely best political constitution, but that is best which is best for each nation. And the main point which should be regarded is that each political system remain true to its own general principle or constitutive idea. What this leading idea or principle is we have now to indicate briefly.

Spinoza holds that "experience has already revealed every kind of State in which men can live together in concord," and that therefore Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Democracy are the only possible forms of political order. "If the administration of the State is vested in a Council consisting of the general body of the people, the State is a democratic one, while if this Council consists of certain select individuals it is an Aristocracy, and lastly if the administration of State affairs, and therefore the sovereignty, is vested in one man, it

is a Monarchy" (*Tract. Pol.*, 2, 17). But when, later on in the *Tractatus Politicus*, Spinoza gets to close quarters with the discussion of the different forms of State, he points out, in different passages, certain elements which modify considerably the definitions here given. He shows, for instance, that a real Monarchy is an impossibility. One man cannot be anything but the nominal ruler of a people, and so every Monarch, called to the office of sovereign, straightway seeks out for himself officers, ministers, or favourites who enable him to rule, and really share the sovereignty with him. And thus a nominal Monarchy is always at the least an Aristocracy, although secretly so. Again, the difference between an aristocracy and a democracy is not merely or chiefly—as might appear from the passage above quoted—the number who share in the sovereign power. You can, Spinoza holds, have a democratic State where those who rule bear only a small proportion to those who are ruled, while you may have an aristocracy in which all the people share in the sovereign power. What he wishes to bring out is, that the real distinction is not one of number merely. A real aristocracy will be that in which the men who are to rule are chosen as best fitted by their personal endowments for this post, while a real democracy will be that in which personal fitness is not the determining element, but in which men can claim to have the right of sharing in the supreme power quite apart from any question of their fitness. Aristocracy involves express and individual election, democracy does not. In a real aristocracy therefore there can be no hereditary right to share in sovereign power, as a man who can claim this right on the ground that he is his father's son, is not elected as being the best fitted for rule. Similarly, a general law which enacts that certain classes shall rule, or that all the wealthy shall rule, is inconsistent with a really aristocratic State, for no civil law can secure that the members of certain classes, or that those who are wealthy, will be best fitted for ruling. What we commonly call a hereditary aristocracy Spinoza regards as no real aristocracy at all, as there is no security for the members of this class being the wisest men in the State. It is more truly a narrow democracy, such a

democracy as the Greeks believed in, in which the unprivileged might outnumber the privileged by five to one.

Thus a nominal Monarchy is really a secret Aristocracy, but a bad form of Aristocracy just because it is not openly such. While an aristocracy which rests on class privilege is not a real aristocracy or government by the *best* men in the State at all. And a democracy may exist where the ruling class is much fewer in number than those who are ruled, if they rule in virtue of their birth, rank or wealth, and not in virtue of their wisdom. Spinoza believes that Aristocratic rule (in the sense of rule vested in the best or wisest men in the community) is the highest form of rule, and that, could it be kept true to its idea or ideal, it would be the one actual form of rule. But this is just the difficulty. Those who already rule in an aristocratic State do, if they are set to choose others as colleagues on the ground of their fitness or of their being the best men, somehow generally come to the conclusion that the 'best' men are to be found "among the rich, or among their own blood-relations, or amongst their friends." They may come to this conclusion from quite honest or honourable motives, just because each man's knowledge is limited, and he best appreciates the excellences of those who are brought most into personal relations with himself. But though this bias may be quite honest, it is none the less a great danger to the State, for a mistake of judgment, and the consequent elevation to place and power of those who are really unfit to rule a people wisely, may bring most disastrous consequences to every one in the community. The honest intention does nothing to avert the inevitable harm and loss. It is for this reason that, while a real aristocracy, or government by the best or wisest men in the State, is theoretically the best, it is seldom a practical success. For it involves some faultless arrangement for discovering the wisest men in the State, and for preventing any but the wisest attaining to place and power. But this is just the rock on which all nominal aristocracies are wrecked. They do not really always seek out the wisest and best men, and even when they do, they may make mistakes or misjudgments from whose consequences all must suffer. It is just because no

human beings can be depended on to be always infallible, that Aristocracy (in the true sense) is a failure, and always degenerates into an oligarchy of birth or wealth which has none of that divine right or power to rule men's lives which only wisdom can give.

Thus while a true Aristocracy is the best form of rule, in the sense that the State and all its citizens will be most prosperous when the wisest and best men within it are in power, a nominal aristocracy of wealth or rank or birth may be the worst of all forms of rule, the most calamitous to the State and the citizens alike. And it is because a close corporation, or privileged class, inevitably loses touch with the real problems for the solution of which it exists, and thus fails to discharge the function for the sake of which it enjoys place and power, that a democratic State is at once a more stable, a more efficient, and a more beneficent form of political order than either a monarchical or an aristocratic one.

Spinoza's discussion of the nature and value of Democracy was no more than begun when death came to him, and we have not the benefit of any detailed treatment of this question in his works. But from frequent references to the problem in his exposition and criticism of other points it is possible to determine clearly his general attitude toward it. He holds, in the first place, that democratic rule is the "most natural" of all practicable forms of government, that is to say, the most consonant with the 'liberties' of a people. For "in a community, the government of which is vested in all its members, and in which, therefore, the laws have the sanction of common consent, obedience to an alien authority can have no place. Whether the laws are increased or diminished in number, the people in such a State remain equally free, seeing that the laws are the expression of their own common will, and are not enacted in virtue of an authority vested in any one else" (*Theol.-Pol.*, Ch. 5). In such a political order the people are saved from the dangerous belief that they have to be on the alert to prevent the rulers encroaching on their liberties; and the rulers are saved from the no less dangerous delusion that they may lord it over their subjects as they please. The real identity of interest which is always present

and operative under every form of rule becomes most patent to, or most readily apprehended by, both rulers and subjects in a democratic State. Where all may rule in turn, and where all have in turn to obey, law most clearly shows itself as the rule laid down by the reason or wisdom of the whole people for their guidance toward, and achievement of, their greatest happiness and welfare. Thus law ceases, under a democracy, to be regarded as an alien force imposed by the will of a stronger, and reveals itself as the friend and helper of the whole people's endeavour.

Moreover, in a democracy the constant bickering and dispute about what powers and prerogatives the ruler should have, and what liberties the people should retain, becomes impossible. These disputes could indeed, as we have seen, arise under any form of State only where rulers and ruled did not understand the 'eternal truth' of the relation that binds them to one another, and which makes the weakness and the strength of the one to be also the weakness and the strength of the other. But this want of understanding, this partial knowledge and devotion to narrow interests, is just the hindrance to the true unity and progress of a people. Hence, if we can, by wise political arrangements, bring home to all the citizens the fact that a strong and efficient government is the primal and essential condition of their happiness and mutual co-operation, we shall have gained a great deal. And this is what a democratic State can do more effectively than any other form of State. It can show that government is in this case—what is equally true of every case, if men would but see it—the people ruling themselves, and not a game in which the rulers and their subjects play antagonistic parts. Hence, under a democracy new laws can be made for meeting new situations and circumstances without fear of awakening the morbid jealousy that this is a further restriction of the people's liberty or an extension of the King's prerogative. A new law wisely made can here show itself from the first as what it always really is, namely, an enlargement of the people's liberty or power or spiritual capacities. For this reason Spinoza holds that a democracy is better able to make new laws when they

are needed, since no question of encroachment or aggression can arise at all, when the people who have to obey the law are also the people who make the law. It follows from this, further, that a democratic State can be "entirely or completely absolute," that is to say, it can be perfect master in its own house, and can make use of its citizens' lives and resources to the best advantage of the whole community without arousing the suspicion that they are being 'exploited' in the interest of the ruler or of a privileged class.

Another advantage of a democratic State is "that its distinctive excellence is better realised in peace than in war"; and hence such a State will always seek to promote and further the activities, interests, objects of desire and attainment which alone really unite men in an indissoluble way, and which can be developed only in a state of peace, and under a stable order of social life and civil rights and duties.

The one defect of a democratic State which Spinoza takes notice of is its apparent instability and want of permanence. "No form of political order seems to have had less permanence than popular or democratic ones, nor have there been any in which seditions have been more frequent." His reply to this practically is, that there are seditions and seditions. You may make a desert and call it peace, you may make a nation into slaves and call it a kingdom. But a State in which the people are kept in a state of ignorance, prejudice, weakness, or poverty, and are prevented from developing their best powers, is not a strong State, even if internal dissensions are not frequent. There are high qualities which you cannot get without accepting the defects that may attend them. And a nation's eager interest in, and devotion to, the best ends, its thinking and willing of its own welfare, is worth purchasing even if this gives rise to more difference of opinion, and a greater readiness to fight for one's own sense of what is right and just, than there would be in a nation of slaves. Spinoza's point here, as in the case of the freedoms which a citizen-soldiery claim for themselves, is that even such defects are indicative of far higher power, capacity, and devotion to one's country and its laws, than would be found in a State in which such freedom was

repressed. The disturbances, and even the civil wars, in some communities are of more value than the torpid peace of others ; for it is better that men should be willing to fight, and to lay down their property and their lives, for the cause with which in their judgment the welfare of their country is bound up, than that they should care nothing for their country, take no interest in its welfare, and be ready to acquiesce in any end or command whatever.

As regards the other objection commonly alleged against Democratic States, namely, that the people have very little real knowledge, or judgment, or self-control, and are therefore not fit to be trusted with the task of ruling themselves, nor even with the task of choosing their rulers, Spinoza's attitude toward it may be gathered from such statements as the following :

"Although a Council which consists of such a large number of citizens will necessarily have a considerable admixture of men of very slight intelligence, yet it cannot be doubted that every man is shrewd and astute enough in matters to which he has long devoted himself with great eagerness. Hence if none are elected to this supreme Council except those who have followed their callings without reproach up to their fiftieth year, they will be sufficiently well qualified to give advice in cases where their own interests are concerned, especially if, in matters of moment, time is allowed for reflection. And it should be noted further, that a Council which consisted of a small number of members would not be any more likely to be free from such an unenlightened element. On the contrary, such a small Council would be sure to consist mainly of men of this sort, for in a small Council every one does his utmost to get stupid colleagues whom he can lead as he pleases—a condition of things which cannot arise in a large Council" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 4).

"What we have written may perhaps excite the ridicule of those who credit the common people alone with the defects and failings which are to be found in all mortals. Such men tell us that the populace has no moderation, that it spreads terror around unless it is itself checked by fear, that the people must be either humble servants or haughty masters, and that they are destitute of truth and of judgment, and so on. All men, however, have one common nature. We are deceived by authority and refinement, and hence when two men do the same thing we often say that the one may do it with impunity while the other may not, and we say so, not because the actions are different, but only because the agents are. Pride is natural to those who have the mastery. Men are proud even of

being appointed to office for a year, and what then can be expected of Nobles who claim a perpetual title to honour. But their arrogance is set off by assumption, by magnificence, by prodigality, by a kind of harmony of vices, by a certain skill in playing the fool, and by some good taste in their corruption. In this way vices which, if they were each viewed by itself, and so raised into prominence, would show themselves to be ugly and base, are regarded by the inexperienced and the ignorant as honourable and becoming. Again, if it be true that 'the populace knows no moderation, and strikes terror into others unless they are terrified themselves,' this is but the natural consequence of their misgovernment, as liberty and slavery are not easily conjoined. Lastly, as for the statement 'that the common people are not endowed with either truth or discernment,' is this much to be wondered at, when the chief affairs of State are transacted in secret, and the people are reduced to form conjectures from the few matters which cannot be concealed. For the power to suspend one's judgment is a rare virtue. Hence, to try to keep the citizens in ignorance of all that is going on, and yet expect them not to make erroneous judgments regarding public affairs, or not to put a sinister interpretation on their rulers' doings, argues the greatest ignorance of human nature. For if the populace could exercise self-control, could suspend their judgment about matters of which they have but slight knowledge, and could form right judgments about affairs from what little they do know regarding them, they would forsooth deserve rather to be the rulers than the ruled. But, as we have said, human nature is the same in all men. Rule makes all men proud. All strike terror into others unless they are themselves made afraid. And everywhere truth and right suffer from the enmities and infirmities of men, especially when one or a few men bear sway, and have regard in their judgments not to justice and truth, but to the amount of a man's wealth" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 27).

Spinoza points out further that Democracy was the earliest form of rule, and that it gradually transformed itself into Aristocracy, and that in turn into Monarchy.

"I am quite convinced that most Aristocratic States have at one time been Democratic. This process of development may be expressed somewhat as follows. A people, while in search of pastures new, and also after it has found them, and brought them under cultivation, maintains the equal right of all to rule, as no one voluntarily makes another his master. But although each of them thinks it only fair that he should have the same authority and right over another as that other has over him, they all think it unjust that aliens who settle amongst them should have equal rights with themselves in the country for which they had laboriously sought, and for the possession of which they had shed their blood. Nor do the aliens at first think this withholding of civic privileges unjust, as

they migrate to this country not for power, but to further their own private interests, and they are perfectly content with the freedom to follow their own calling with security. Meantime, however, the population increases through constant immigration. And these aliens gradually adopt the national customs, until at length there is nothing to distinguish them from the citizens except the fact that they are ineligible for public office. And whilst the number of these aliens is daily on the increase, that of the citizens is ever on the wane. Such a decrease is due to many causes. Families frequently become extinct, some men lose their citizenship through their own wrongdoing, and very many are prevented by straitened private circumstances from taking any part in public affairs. In the meantime the more powerful among the citizens are doing their utmost to exclude all the rest from office. Thus by degrees the government gets into the hands of a few, and at length it is through faction vested in a single man" (*Tract. Pol.*, 8, 12).

Spinoza works out, in the later part of the *Tractatus Politicus*, his general political principles with much detail in relation to Monarchical and to Aristocratic States. The particular arrangements and forms of organisation which he suggests are simply the embodiment of these principles in relation to the ruling idea of each type of government, and it is not necessary here to do more than give one or two illustrations of his method.

In a Monarchical State, the ruling idea is that the power of the King shall mean the devotion or interest of his people, and that no foreign element, such as a body of mercenary troops, or a privileged class, shall be allowed to exist within its borders. If this ruling idea is fully recognised, the Monarch and the people will learn to know one another, to rely upon one another, and to find their best happiness and prosperity in and through the efficiency and strength which the other gains. Thus all political arrangements which are serviceable for producing such mutual knowledge and dependence are the dictate of Reason. One such arrangement is that the King have a supreme Council elected from the citizens and by the citizens, whose members shall have intimate knowledge of the condition and needs of the people. This is desirable, for, as a Monarch cannot possibly really rule by himself, and must have officials to tell him the state of his kingdom, it is better for both King and people that these Councillors should be men who really

know the people than that they should be army generals, or royal favourites who may have no real knowledge at all. This supreme Council or Parliament is an essential part of the legislature. It has to advise the King about what the public interest requires, and it is not lawful for the King to make a law without consulting it, nor even to make a law which did not get large support in this Parliament of popular representatives. This Council has also to promulgate the royal enactments, and to see that they are given effect to. All business coming before the Monarch has first to pass through its hands. It ought to look to the education of the heir to the throne, as it is of vital importance to the State that he be rightly trained and educated; all the more that his father may deliberately keep him ignorant, or allow him to indulge his passions, that he may have nothing to fear from his prudence, capacity, or popularity. (2) There should be a subordinate Council, or Committee of Parliament, to meet daily, and carry on the regular and routine executive and administrative work of government. (3) A Council for the administration of civil and criminal Justice is also to be established. (4) There should be local or Town Councils in each city to deal with the affairs of that city. (5) Only a citizen-soldiery should be allowed within the community. (6) The land should be the property of the whole State.

By these political arrangements Spinoza believes that the Monarch and the people will alike gain the best for themselves, as well as do their duty in the most efficient way, and so be of the highest service to one another. For the "single rule I have followed in my organisation of a Monarchical State is that the people under a Monarchy will secure to themselves a sufficiently ample freedom, if they simply make sure that the power of the Monarch can mean nothing but the power of his people, and see that the maintenance of his power depends solely on their protection" (*Tract. Pol.*, 7, 31).

In an Aristocratic State the organising principle, or the relation of the parts of the State to one another, is different, and this difference makes the application of Spinoza's

general political principles assume a different form. For while, under a nominally Monarchical State, the king could not really govern a whole people, but inevitably had as his helpers or ministers either favourites of his own or ministers elected by the people from amongst themselves, the case is different with a Council of Patricians elected because of their capacities, and wielding sovereign power. The latter can be not only nominally, but also really sovereign, and does not need any assistance from without. Thus the vital differences between a Monarchical Sovereign and an Aristocratic Sovereign or supreme Council are: I. That though the power of one man is quite unequal to the burden of ruling a whole nation, the power of a large Council is quite adequate to the task, and hence while a King requires other Councillors to assist him, a Council does not. II. Kings are mortal, while Councils are eternal. Hence, under an Aristocracy, the power never returns to the people as it in effect does under a Monarchy on the death of each King. III. A Monarch's actual exercise of sovereignty, owing to his minority, his illness, old age, and so on, is often in abeyance, while the power of a Council is always in active exercise. IV. "The will of one man is liable to much variation and inconstancy. This is the reason why even where, as under a Monarchy, all law is the King's deliberate or expressed will, yet every wish on the King's part does not have the force of law. But the same cannot be said regarding the will of a sufficiently large Council, as every expressed wish on its part must necessarily have the force of law. Hence the government of a people which is once transferred to a sufficiently large Council is absolute, or approaches very closely to an absolute one. If there is any government entirely absolute or unlimited, it must be the government which is exercised by a nation as a whole" (*Tract. Pol.*, 8, 3).

These differences between Monarchical and Aristocratic rule *necessitate* different constitutional arrangements. For the supreme Council in an Aristocratic State is supposed to consist of the wisest and ablest men in the State, and if it actually does so, it can achieve, in virtue of its own capacity,

strength and wisdom, what no king, were he as wise as Solomon, could possibly do, without relying upon the help and co-operation of his ministers and Parliament. Thus it is meant to be a sort of Witenagemot or council of wise men, like a Platonic body of Guardians, who have supreme power in the State in virtue of their supreme wisdom and knowledge of what is best for the whole community. Spinoza believes that this arrangement does no injustice to the people who do not rule, for they are not made rulers or members of the supreme Council just because they are not the best qualified for fulfilling this important function. It is in the best interest of every one within the State that those shall rule who can do it best.

But clearly the success of this form of government depends wholly and solely on the wisdom of this supreme Council. If the Council cease to contain within it the skill, prudence, insight, and foresight of the best and ablest men within the community, its power, and its authority or right, to rule inevitably passes from it. No matter whether it retain the name or not, if it is not in fact and in truth the Council of the really wise, it will have no weight or influence, and it will be a curse to the people instead of a blessing. Hence all the political arrangements which Spinoza recommends have this one end and aim, namely, to secure that the best and ablest men in the community shall be members of this sovereign Council, and that the Aristocracy of rule shall be so in virtue of its Aristocracy of talent and capacity.

To carry this into effect, it is necessary to fix the number of members of the Supreme Council in proportion to the number of inhabitants, and to keep this proportion, else there will be no sufficient security for the members possessing that intimate knowledge of the people's needs and wishes, which is essential if they are to be really wise or efficient governors and legislators. Suppose the population of the State to be such that one hundred able and wise men could know the state of the people thoroughly, and could actually have control over their spirits, then to make sure of 'catching' the hundred you need, you must cast a much wider net. For one who knows human nature will recognise

that the great majority of those who seek, and secure, election to high place, are of very little service for carrying out the real work of their office, and that thus the reins of power do actually, and properly, fall into the hands of the few men who really know their work and can do it. Thus if one hundred 'best' men are essential for the welfare of the whole community, it will be necessary to allow about 5000 to be chosen as nominal rulers, since we cannot depend on getting more than two, or at the most three, men of genuine capacity and skill and insight out of every hundred who are ambitious of, and are successful in attaining, the honour of membership in this supreme Council. For the sake of securing this hundred, it is necessary to endure the other 4900. And after all the hardship will not be great, as the men who can do the work will get the work to do, while those who enjoy the honour of their rank will also get the leisured and dignified ease which they most prize.

The organisation which might best keep the rulers of an Aristocratic State true to the constitutive idea of their own civil order, Spinoza works out thus : I. There should be the supreme Council, having power to make and repeal laws, to choose new colleagues, and to elect all the Ministers of State ; and no individual in this Council should have any power or right as an individual, for all that he has a right to do must be by and through a decree of the whole Council. II. There should be a Council of Syndics whose sole duty should be to see that the fundamental constitutional provisions of the State are not violated by any one, however high he be in office or in rank. This Council should have the power to call any one to account for unconstitutional action, and the power to punish him if it judge him guilty of thus seeking to destroy the unity and harmonious co-operation of all the organs of the common life. III. Of this Council of Syndics there shall be a small Committee, meeting every day, to consider such matters as may need prompt attention, and with power to call a special meeting of the whole body of Syndics should any emergency require this. IV. There shall be a Senate which shall meet at stated times to transact ordinary administrative duties, matters of

great moment being referred to the Supreme Council. And for the daily executive work which needs to be efficiently carried on, the Senate should divide itself into four or six sections which should each carry on the work for three or for two months in the course of the year. V. There shall be a supreme Court of Justice having jurisdiction in all civil and criminal affairs, its members to be elected by the supreme Council or Parliament.

These correlated and mutually dependent bodies are designed to secure—as far as any human arrangements can—that wisdom, prudence, and capacity will come to the office and the function which are required for the well-being of the whole State, but which will be neither an office nor a function at all unless the men who are called to them have the enlightenment, skill, enterprise, and insight which constitute the strength and power of a nation's life and endeavour. Government by the 'best' men in the community is the ideal form of government, if any infallible means of finding them could be devised. But as no such means has yet been found, except that which the more or less narrow, partial, and sometimes prejudiced judgments of men supply, we must be content that each nation work out its own political salvation through the forms of civil order which embody its own thought, ideals, and hopes, for these are its 'best,'—the soul and endeavour of all its organisation and political machinery.



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